



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

38,1009.
~~1098.~~

THE DOMESTIC CHAPLAIN;

OR,

SERMONS

ON

FAMILY DUTIES

FOR EVERY SUNDAY IN THE YEAR.

BY

I. E. N. MOLESWORTH, D.D.

RECTOR OF ST. MARTIN'S, CANTERBURY,

ONE OF THE SIX PREACHERS OF CANTERBURY CATHEDRAL.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR J. G. & F. RIVINGTON,

ST. PAUL'S CHURCH YARD,
AND WATERLOO PLACE, FALL MALL.

1838.



1098.

LONDON :
GILBERT AND RIVINGTON, PRINTERS,
ST. JOHN'S SQUARE.

CONTENTS

OF

VOLUME II.

SERMON XXVII.

ON EDUCATION.

EPH. vi. 4.

PAGE

Bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord . . . 1

SERMON XXVIII.

BAPTISM AS CONNECTED WITH CONFIRMATION.

MATT. xxviii. 19.

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the
name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. . . 20

SERMON XXIX.

ON CONFIRMATION.

ACTS viii. 14—17.

Now when the Apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that
Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them
Peter and John : who, when they were come down, prayed for
them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost. For as yet he
was fallen upon none of them : only they were baptized in the
name of the Lord Jesus. Then laid they their hands on them,
and they received the Holy Ghost 36

SERMON XXX.

NAAMAN'S EXAMPLE APPLIED TO CONFIRMATION.

2 KINGS v. 12.

PAGE

Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all
the waters of Israel? May I not wash in them, and be clean? 49

SERMON XXXI.

ANANIAS A WARNING APPLICABLE TO CONFIRMATION.

ACTS v. 4.

Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God. 65

SERMON XXXII.

ADMONITION TO THOSE CONFIRMED.

2 CHRON. xxix. 11.

My sons, be not now negligent; for the Lord hath chosen you
to stand before Him, to serve Him. 78

SERMON XXXIII.

THE ORIGIN AND NATURE OF THE MARRIAGE CONTRACT.

MATT. xix. 6.

What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder 91

SERMON XXXIV.

ON THE PURPOSES, AND SOLEMNIZATION, OF MARRIAGE.

MATT. xix. 6.

What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder 107

SERMON XXXV.

ON THE DUTIES OF HUSBAND AND WIFE.

1 COR. xi. 11, 12.

Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the
woman without the man, in the Lord. For as the woman is
of the man, even so is the man also by the woman; but all
things of God. 129

CONTENTS.

v

SERMON XXXVI.

THE DEATH OF CHRIST SHOWN FORTH IN THE LORD'S
SUPPER.

1 COR. xi. 26.

PAGE

For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew
the Lord's death till he come. 154

SERMON XXXVII.

DUTIES OF A CHILD.

MARK x. 14.

Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not :
for of such is the kingdom of God 166

SERMON XXXVIII.

DUTIES OF A YOUTH.

GEN. viii. 21.

The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth 180

SERMON XXXIX.

THE YOUNG MAN'S MEANS AND OBLIGATIONS TO HOLI-
NESS.

ECCLES. xi. 9.

Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth ; and let thy heart cheer
thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine
heart, and in the sight of thine eyes : but know thou, that for
all these things God will bring thee into judgment. 193

SERMON XL.

THE YOUNG MAN CAUTIONED TO TAKE HEED TO HIS WAYS.

PSALM cxix. 9.

Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking
heed thereto according to thy word. 205

SERMON XLI.

GOD'S WORD THE YOUNG MAN'S ONLY SAFE GUIDE.

PSALM cxix. 9.

PAGE

Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking
heed thereto according to thy word. 217

SERMON XLII.

CAUTIONS AND DUTIES OF THE MIDDLE AGED.

MATT. xiii. 22.

He also, that received seed among the thorns, is he that heareth
the word : and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness
of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful 228

SERMON XLIII.

CAUTIONS AND DUTIES OF OLD AGE.

PROV. xvi. 31.

The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of
righteousness. 241

SERMON XLIV.

FEMALE CHARACTER.

1 PET. iii. 5.

After this manner, in the old time, the holy women also, who
trusted in God, adorned themselves. 253

SERMON XLV.

ON PRAYER GENERALLY.

PHIL. iv. 6, 7.

Be careful for nothing ; but in every thing by prayer and sup-
plication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known
unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all under-
standing, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ
Jesus. 272

SERMON XLVI.

PRIVATE PRAYER.

MATT. vi. 6.

PAGE

Thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet. 287

SERMON XLVII.

THE SOCIAL PRINCIPLE OF PUBLIC WORSHIP.

1 TIM. ii. 1.

I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, inter-
cessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men 302

SERMON XLVIII.

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS ON PUBLIC PRAYER.

PSALM cxxxiv. 2.

Lift up your hands in the sanctuary, and bless the Lord 317

SERMON XLIX.

FAMILY PRAYER.

COLOSS. iv. 2.

Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving. . 334

SERMON L.

ON KEEPING HOLY THE SEVENTH DAY.

GEN. ii. 3.

God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it 347

SERMON LI.

POPULAR EXCUSES FOR NEGLECTING THE LORD'S SUPPER.

LUKE xiv. 18.

They all with one consent began to make excuse. 361

SERMON LII.

THE END OF THE YEAR.

ISAIAH xl. 6—8.

PAGE

The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field: the grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever	382
--	-----

SERMON XXVII.

ON EDUCATION.

THE PRAYER.

O LORD, our Heavenly Father, we implore thine especial blessing upon all Schools and Seminaries of religious and useful Learning; that in those and all other places more immediately dedicated to thy honour and service, whatsoever tends to the advancement of true religion and useful learning may for ever flourish and abound. Grant this, O Father, for the glory of thy name, through Christ Jesus. Amen.

Eph. vi. 4.

BRING THEM UP IN THE NURTURE AND ADMONITION OF THE
LORD.

“TRAIN up a child,” said Solomon, “in the way that he should go; and, when he is old, he will not depart from it.” To put this precept into practice is the great duty of parents in the education of their children; and, to touch upon a few particulars, in which this requires children to be taught, the present discourse is to be devoted. Education, then, is to be applied to beings *passing through* this life,

and *intended* for another; a truth which, however obvious, seems to be in practice too commonly overlooked, or at least only half adopted. Many educate their children as though they were intended *only* for this life; while others, though fewer in number, with an indiscreet zeal, treat their children as though they had *no connexion* with this life, and could be made to absorb their *whole* attention, and affection, in the pursuit of another. Both these systems must be attended with failure in very important points, inasmuch as they are both based upon false and defective foundations, and therefore can never form a solid or useful superstructure. Education, to be conducted profitably, must proceed upon true principles; it must regard man, not as we would wish him to be, but as he is—a member of God's family on *earth*, as well as an aspirant to a place in God's family in *Heaven*. He has duties to perform, and necessities to supply, here, as well as interests to secure, and a crown to strive for, there. And all these interests must be contemplated by that parent who would educate his children to any practical purpose. God has provided all his creatures with powers which, by proper exertion and direction, may enable them to accomplish what is necessary to themselves, or due from them to others. And, in rational beings, the province of education is, to give those powers their proper stimulus and direction, for the attainment of such objects, present or future, as both their

station and necessities in this life, and their hopes in the next, may require. In the attainment also of these objects, regard must be had to the means by which they may be accomplished, and to the capacities of those who are to be educated. It will be as well, therefore, in treating of the education of children, to class our remarks under the head,

I. Of those means and appliances which come under the denomination of education, in the sense of mere *worldly instruction*.

II. Of those lessons which may be comprehended under the phrase of *religious education*.

I. Then with respect to education, in what is generally called mere worldly knowledge, I shall confine myself to that department of it which, in common conversation, is usually considered to be expressed by the term "education," namely, instruction in reading, writing, languages, and sciences. When I speak of these as merely worldly education, I do not wish to be understood as denying, that they are capable of application, as *means* to an end, in the promotion of spiritual improvement. On the contrary, I should wish this application of them always to be kept in view, and to be regarded by parents as the primary object for which these acquirements should be imparted to their children. But though this spiritual improvement may be the primary object, yet there are secondary objects connected with this life, to which they may be beneficially applied, and which no parent is justified in

despising. "Xenophon," says Tillotson, "tells us, that the Persians, instead of making their children learned, taught them to be virtuous; and, instead of filling their heads with fine speculations, taught them honesty, and sincerity, and resolution; and endeavoured to make them wise and valiant, just and temperate. Lycurgus also, in the institution of the Lacedæmonian commonwealth, took no care about learning, but only about the lives and manners of their children: though I should think, that the care of both is best; and that learning would very much help to form the manners of children, and to make them both wiser and better men. And therefore, with the leave of so great and wise a lawgiver, I cannot but think, that this was a defect in his institution; because learning, if it be under the conduct of true wisdom and goodness, is not only an ornament, but a great advantage to the better government of any kingdom or commonwealth."

It is due, therefore, both to our country, to mankind at large, to our domestic circle, and to our children personally, that parents should educate their offspring in those branches of knowledge which may be suitable to their state of life, and attainable according to our respective means. It is not our province here, to enter into a discussion upon the best modes of education, with reference to the different fortunes and circumstances of parents; but we may observe, that whether a rich man begrudge

his children the cost of a liberal education, or a poor man neglect to profit by the public means of education offered to his children, both are depriving them of advantages, which may minister to rational pleasure, as well as to temporal profit, and even spiritual advancement; and at the same time are doing an injury to their country, and to the community at large. There is certainly one source of anxiety connected with this department of education, which may, not unreasonably, engage the attention, and often excites the apprehensions, of well-disposed parents; and that is, the danger of contamination and vicious example, to which their children must be exposed in their attendance at school. I do not question their duty to be careful in this respect; nay, indeed, I would strongly urge that, in the selection both of masters, and also of schools, they should endeavour to select those whose character stands highest, not only for learning, but also for morality and religion. Yet, without meaning to enter upon a controversy on the relative merits of public and private education, I cannot but think that too sensitive a fear of public schools is often entertained. As man is intended for society, one great purpose of early education is to prepare him to bear his part in it; to accustom him in early life to those varieties of dispositions, to discipline and inure him for encountering those shocks and temptations, and to bring him to that habit of adapting himself to those compliances, and to those

collisions, with the wills and interests of others, with which he must meet when he goes forth on the great stage of the world, and into which he may be initiated in the minor scene of a youthful community. For want of this early discipline, a young man, brought up under the roof of his parents in a kind of artificial state, in a kind of moral effeminacy and tenderness, may find himself taken by surprise, when he enters the field of public life; and, being deficient in those quick resources, and the self-exertion, which early habit supplies, and not inured to the jostling and conflicts arising from various dispositions and interests, he may be exposed not only to inconvenience, but to injury and danger, both temporal and spiritual. Every man has a part to act in *society*, and his training and education ought therefore, from the *beginning*, to have reference to this his *inevitable situation*, and be directed to accustom him to act in it beneficially to himself and to others. Our limits will not admit of our entering more at large upon this department of education; let us proceed, therefore, to consider,

II. Secondly, those instructions, and parental duties, which may be comprehended under *religious education*.

I have said that, in considering the purposes, for which education is to be given, mankind are apt to fall into two mistakes; the one is, that of educating them *solely* for this life; and the other, of educating them as though they had *no* duties, nor interests in

this life, but were to be abstracted, entirely and exclusively, to considerations connected with the life to come. The true state of the case is, that *both* demand their attention, but that the latter is infinitely the *most important*, and always entitled to be considered as *first*, and *paramount*, whenever the two come into competition. It is, indeed, melancholy to see the blindness and infatuation, with which parents in general seem to treat education; as though it were intended to prepare their children only for time, instead of for eternity. The eagerness with which lessons of thrift, and gain, and ambition, are inculcated, while religion is wholly disregarded, or treated as an inferior subject, is an evidence, which admits of no question, that the world is uppermost in the thoughts of too many parents. But, on the other hand, care should be taken not to make religion, or rather religious observances, the *sole* subject of tuition: for the effect of this would probably be, either to disgust the young person with religion altogether, or to bring him up in a gloomy and speculative fanaticism, incompatible with the active benevolence, and social spirit, of the Gospel. Let religious motives be urged as the *ruling* principle of action in even the discharge of worldly duties; but let those motives be inculcated at *proper* times and seasons, and with a due regard to the *habits* and *capacities* of those who are to receive them. Let them not be made a perpetual lesson, but gently instilled into the mind

as much by *example*, as by precept, by commending and enforcing attendance upon the ordinances of religion, and use of the means of grace. With these preliminary observations, proceed we next to enter upon a few particulars of parental duty in this respect.

1st. The religious education of children cannot begin too early. And the first step that a parent has to take is to begin with dedicating the child to God, through Christ Jesus. Let him be entered into the Christian covenant, as Jesus has directed, and received into the "*Ark of Christ's Church*¹;" in which those, who would be saved from "perishing," are enjoined to take refuge, and "so pass the waves of this troublesome world, that finally they may come to the land of everlasting life."

As a consequence of baptism, it will be also the parent's duty, when the child shall come to a proper age, to bring him also to the bishop to be *confirmed*, according to the directions of our own, and the practice of the primitive church. But we need not dwell on these duties here, as they will be made the subjects of separate discourses.

2nd. Having consecrated the child to God in baptism, the duty of the parents will be to teach him the precepts and doctrines of the Gospel, and bring him up in the doctrine and discipline of that church, into which he has been admitted.

¹ See first Prayer in Baptismal Service.

It will not be necessary that I should here enter into many arguments to prove the importance of early lessons, and habits of piety and religion. The soil awaits the hand of the sower; it must be occupied. If the good seed be not implanted, the enemy will sow the tares. From the first dawn of reason teach children to lift up their little hands, and innocent hearts, in prayer to their Heavenly Father. Habituate them to a sense of His presence and protection; let them not, on any evening, lay themselves down to sleep, without having first commended their bodies, and souls, to His gracious keeping, through all the perils and dangers of the night; and having acknowledged on whom they depend for repose and safety, "I will lay me down in peace, and take my rest; for it is thou, Lord, only that makest me to dwell in safety¹;" let them not quit their chamber in the morning, to enter upon their pleasures and employments, without having first thanked God for His care of them during the night, and implored His guidance and defence during the day. "Thou knowest my down-sitting and mine up-rising, thou understandest my thoughts afar off. Thou compasses my path and my lying-down, and art acquainted *with* all my ways. For *there* is not a word in my tongue, *but* lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether²."

¹ Psalm iv. 9. Version of Liturgy.

² Psalm cxxxix. 2—4.

Let them be also accustomed to see *practically* illustrated the union of the members of Christ's church, both in family prayer and in the public ordinances of religion. These *practical* lessons of piety, and dependence upon God, will do more to impress upon their hearts a sense of religion, than the most laboured system of teaching. They constitute also a mode of teaching within the reach of any capacity, and which can be employed by the most plain and unlearned: not that other instruction, where the means of imparting it exist, is to be withheld; but no instruction will be more efficacious than early *habits* of piety, arising from early *practice* of piety. They will be easily acquired, and lasting in their duration. For the reception of this instruction, *every* child is qualified; but other instruction must be modified and adapted to the various ages and capacities of children. And it is due to mothers, and desirable for the good of all, that we should here advert to the great importance of *maternal* instruction and superintendence, in sowing the *first seeds*, and cherishing the tender blade of piety and virtue in the infant breast. At a period when the child is highly susceptible of strong impressions, when its affections are almost exclusively fixed on the mother, and hers, in its fullest and tenderest power, concentrated on the child, great, and indescribably valuable, are the opportunities at her disposal. The ever-active vigilance of a mother's love sees hourly those opportunities, and can

profit by them amidst the endearments and caresses in which only mothers can carry on sweet intercourse with the opening mind of infancy. The gentleness and patience of the female sex, and the concentrated love of the child at that early age, give her a peculiar power and ascendancy over his attention and heart ; and enable her to instil lessons, which, like the dews of heaven, softly, but deeply, penetrate. Much of human happiness and holiness, under the blessing, and through the grace of God, depend upon the mother's affectionate cares at this important season. From these seemingly small beginnings effects are produced of the highest importance, though the point from which they took their origin may have been lost sight of. The mother's lessons of piety and virtue may often, for a long while, be forgotten ; in the hurry of business, in the easy course of pleasure and prosperity, our attention may be altogether diverted from them : but when sorrow and adversity overtake us, when "fearfulness and trembling are come upon us, and horror hath overwhelmed us," and when we "would hasten our escape from the stormy wind and tempest," then the memory of our mother's "hope," and of our mother's faith and prayer, will present itself to our mind. We turn to it as our safety and consolation. It is like the good anchor, hung by the thoughtful captain over the bows of the bark, before she launches out into the great ocean. While prosperous breezes and favouring currents waft her

easily on her course, the anchor may hang over the ship's side unthought of, and scarcely seen by the crew within; but when adverse winds shall arise, the waves rage, and the breakers of destruction flash close at hand, then the use and the value of the anchor is remembered, and it becomes all in all. St. Paul himself makes special allusion to this importance of female superintendence and power in sowing the early seeds of grace, when he reminds Timothy of the piety of his grandmother Lois, and of his mother Eunice¹, and when he places on record the blessings which Timothy himself (and through him the *Church of Christ*) reaped from this holy and early culture. "But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned, and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned *them*. And that from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus²."

As young persons advance in years and intellect, the great mysteries of our faith may be more completely unfolded to them—the awfulness of man's danger through the fall of Adam—the wonders of the scheme of redemption by Christ Jesus—the unity of the three Persons of the Godhead in Trinity—their offices in the work of man's salvation—the nature of Christ's Church, and the claims of that

¹ 2 Tim. i. 5.

² 2 Tim. iii. 14, 15.

branch of it under which they are especially enrolled. These and other topics must be laid before them, but gradually, and by such measures as parents and teachers judge best, according to the age, acquirements, and abilities of the child.

“ In putting them,” says Baxter, “ upon the practice of religious duties, you must carry them on by degrees, and put them at first upon no more than they can bear, either upon the learning of doctrines too high and spiritual for them, or upon such duty for quality or quantity as is over-burdensome to them ; for if you once turn their hearts against religion, and make it seem a slavery and a tedious life to them, you take the course to harden them against it. And therefore all children must not be used alike, as all stomachs must not be forced to eat alike. If you force some to take so much as to become a surfeit, they will loathe that sort of meat as long as they live. I know that nature itself, as corrupt, hath already an enmity to holiness ; and I know that this enmity is not to be indulged in children at all ; but withal I know, that misrepresentations of religion, and imprudent education, is the way to increase it ; and that enmity being in the heart, it is the change of the mind, and love, that is the overcoming of it, and not any such constraint as tendeth not to reconcile the mind by love. The whole skill of parents for the holy education of their children doth consist in this, to make them conceive of holiness as the most amiable and desirable life, which is

by representing it to them in words and practice, not only as most necessary, but also as most profitable, honourable, and delightful."

But at a very early period may those graces and virtues, which are the fruits of a lively faith, and by which alone its life can be manifested to others, or distinguished even by ourselves, at a very early period, may these be taught and inculcated. The first growth of holiness and virtue may be cherished, the first buds of impiety and vice nipped and checked, by a careful and judicious parent. For to little purpose will a parent have set before his child the wonders and mercies of the Gospel, and the power of the spirit of grace, unless he shall have taught the child also, that the religion of Jesus is a religion of *motives*, and that, if it has any life in our breasts, it must excite us to *action*. If we be, indeed, grafted on to the true Vine, and derive from it the animating influence and power of the parent stock, we must "*bring forth much fruit*." And what kind of fruit they should be, St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Galatians, tells us: "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." These are but the heads of duties innumerable to God and man, which the Gospel enforces and teaches us to perform, not by constraint, but willingly, upon motives ever active, and on principles, which render the ways to which it points, "ways of pleasantness, and all its paths peace."

It is not intended, nor indeed possible, here to enumerate all the duties and dispositions which a parent is called upon to cultivate in his children ; but it may be desirable to glance at two or three, which are of great importance, and perhaps, too, often not sufficiently appreciated, nor attended to in due season.

Of these we may first name *industry*, and proper occupation of time. Idleness has been said to be "the root of all evil." And to whatsoever extent this proverbial saying may apply generally, it applies in a *stronger* degree to *young* persons. Unless they shall be taught early habits of industry, not only the occupation of their time, but the *useful* and *holy* occupation of it, they will both lay the foundation of failure and misery in their worldly course, and also present an opening for the great enemy of their souls to betray and ruin them. Parents are too often regardless of the connexion of idleness with crime, and of the dangerous power which the habit of it acquires over the youthful mind.

The next point I would touch upon in education, is attention to the establishment and encouragement of tenderness of heart and general benevolence. I need not now point out the necessity and excellence of true dispositions, but must advert to the faults which may be observed in the education of children, as very commonly allowed to counteract the formation and growth of them, and to strengthen propensities the very reverse. I may particularly

allude to *minor* acts of cruelty, especially to *insects* and *animals*. Parents are too often in the habit of allowing these to pass without reproof or notice. Thus the foundation is frequently laid of merciless and savage inclinations in after life, or at least of thoughtless brutality of heart, which displays itself in injuring the persons, or wounding the feelings, of others. Akin to these acts are *rude and discourteous manners*. Parents are apt to overlook the real nature and tendency of these. They confound true courtesy with a frivolous nicety in matters of ceremony. But real courtesy is founded on *kindness of heart*, a desire to do what is pleasing, and to avoid what is displeasing, to others. And a young person, from being sometimes led to suppose that roughness is frankness, (which is by no means the case,) acquires a habit of rudeness, not caring whose feelings he hurts. A gentle and benevolent heart will never give pain unnecessarily, and will always consider it a duty to please, where it can be done without a sacrifice of principle. Parents should cherish such a disposition ; for more of human happiness, and more of the formation of a child's character, depend upon it than, on a hasty view, we are prone to imagine.

Another principle, which it should be the especial object of education to engraft in the hearts of children, and which is so little regarded, is the *love of truth*.

An inflexible reverence of this should be carefully

instilled. Every evasion of it should be rebuked, and particularly that species of lying which we call *prevaricating*,—that is, using words which are true in one sense, but not true in the sense in which we *expect them to be understood*. This paltry artifice has all the guilt of a direct lie, and a double portion of its cowardice and baseness. All trickery, double dealing, and dissimulation, however sportive, in children, should be checked at once; for from these beginnings grows up the *habit* of lying and deception.

But on all these three subjects I shall have occasion to discourse generally, and not in their especial application to youth. One more principle I will mention, to establish which in youth education should be directed, namely, *self-denial*. This may be painful at first, both for the teacher to enforce, and for the learner to receive. Hence arises often the weak and dangerous indulgence of parents, and a reluctance to enter upon the disagreeable task. But it is one of the most important habits which a young person can acquire. It may at first be laborious, but at last it will bring peace and joy to both the parent and child. It was among the visions of the infidel school of France, that children were to be left to the unrestrained influence of a corrupt nature. The following exposure of this mad vision of human conceit opposed to Divine wisdom, I quote from Bishop Horne's Sermons, and thus conclude:—

“ Upon this principle it is, and because the depravity of our nature begins to show itself very early in operation, that children, as they cannot be made to understand the necessity of denying *themselves*, unless we would see them spoiled and ruined, must be denied by *others* who are about them, their parents or governors. Systems of education, however differing in other respects, all centered here, till some years ago, upon the continent, arose a genius, brilliant as a comet, but, like that, eccentric and portentous, who surprised the world, by advancing, in substance and effect, the following propositions:—‘ That no kind of habits ought to be impressed on children; that you ought never to teach them obedience as a duty; that you should leave them to the natural consequences of their own actions; and that, when reason comes to exert itself in a maturer state, all will be right.’ Should the experiment ever be tried in England, the event will only verify what has been predicted, in a beautiful apostrophe to the pupil of this new philosopher, by an elegant writer of our own:—‘ EMILIUS! how I tremble for thee, while I see thee exposed to the care of thy too ingenious tutor! Fortunate wilt thou be, if thou reachest the end of thy fifth year! Nay, rather fortunate wilt thou be, if those accidents which must inevitably attend thy situation, deprive thee of a life destined to future misery, from the ills of body and of mind, contracted through this early and continued indulgence

of thy infant caprices ! I see thee wilful to thy parents, domineering in the nursery ; surfeiting on meats, bursting with liquids ; inflaming thy body with noxious humours, thy mind with unquiet positions ; running headlong into dangers which thou canst not foresee, and habits which thou canst not eradicate ; mischievous to others, but fatal to thyself.

“ In things of higher and more important concern, which respect not time but eternity, we are all in a situation too nearly resembling that of ‘EMILIUS,’ unless placed under the discipline of a better tutor. That tutor must be religion.’ ”

SERMON XXVIII.

BAPTISM AS CONNECTED WITH CONFIRMATION.

THE PRAYER.

GRANT, O Lord, that as we are baptized into the death of thy blessed Son our Saviour Jesus Christ, so by continual mortifying our corrupt affections we may be buried with him ; and that through the grave, and gate of death, we may pass to our joyful resurrection ; for His merits, who died, and was buried, and rose again for us, thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

MATT. xxviii. 19.

GO YE, THEREFORE, AND TEACH ALL NATIONS, BAPTIZING THEM
IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE SON, AND OF THE
HOLY GHOST.

In the preceding Sermon on the education of children, I mentioned the duty of parents to enter them into the Church of Christ by Baptism, and in due time to bring them to Confirmation. And as it was announced that Confirmation would be one of the subjects to be discussed in the course of our plan of Family Sermons, the present will be as convenient a place for treating of it as we can

select ¹. Our readers also should bear in mind, that our observations do not concern only those who *are* to be confirmed. It will be profitable, indeed it is necessary, that those who *have* been confirmed, should from time to time recal to their thoughts the pledges which they then gave, and compare those pledges with their *subsequent practice*.

But to have a right understanding of the nature of Confirmation, it should be viewed in its connexion with Baptism. And Baptism itself is an event so important in the young Christian's life, that it deserves very attentive consideration—more attentive indeed we fear than it generally obtains. If we may judge by the general conduct of professing Christians, we cannot help inferring, however charitably we may be disposed to regard their proceedings, that they consider the *act* of receiving Baptism as all that is requisite to attain the prize of the Christian calling. They are satisfied to be informed by their parents, or their parish register, or to presume, as a matter of course, that they have been baptized; and they then think no more about it, or of their concern to fulfil its obligations. I propose then, in the present discourse, to offer

¹ I am influenced in this selection not only by the natural connexion of the subject with parental duty, and the education of children, but also by the position in which these Sermons will thus take their station in the monthly numbers of the volume. For it is usually from July to September, that the rite of Confirmation is administered.

some observations upon the nature and importance of Baptism, and to show in what manner our Church connects it with Confirmation.

This design, however, will not lead us into any controversial inquiries respecting the precise manner in which Baptism may be performed, the age at which it may be received, the persons who may administer it, or other disputed matters; with which, unfortunately, human infirmity and ignorance have disturbed the peace of the Church. All that we need concern ourselves with, is that which is universally acknowledged—its institution by Christ. As to the manner in which it is administered, and the light in which it is viewed by the Established Church, those to whom these sermons are addressed, it is presumed, will be satisfied, that she has, in both these respects, conformed to primitive practice, and to the word of God. But before we proceed to remark upon the mode of its performance in our Church, it may be desirable that some notice should be taken of the importance which the Gospel has attached to Baptism. For, as we have already observed, there is too much reason to fear, that it is often sought by parents for their children, and looked upon in after life by those who have received it, as a mere matter of *form*, and without any sufficient consideration of its *origin*, its *importance*, and its *necessity*. But wheresoever a lively sense shall be kept up of the greatness, and goodness, of Him by whom Baptism was ordained; of the *impressive*

and solemn manner in which He commanded its observance; of the *reverend, and carefully recorded, obedience* of the Apostles to this command; of the *uninterrupted continuance* of it in the Church down to this very day; of the blessings of which it is the *token and pledge*; and, finally, of the *perilous consequences* denounced against the neglect of it: where-soever these considerations shall be allowed their due weight, there will always prevail the greatest anxiety to *secure* its covenanted mercies *for those dear to us*; and to avoid *ourselves a forfeiture* of them, by forgetfulness of the engagements into which we then entered. And especially I feel it a duty to put professing Christians in mind, that a remembrance of these things is too often wanting among *godfathers* and *godmothers*. For if these were remembered as they ought to be, we should not find sponsors come, as they too often do come, either *ignorant* of what they are going to promise, or so *thoughtless and indifferent* about it, that they enter into a most awful and responsible pledge before God, with less attention and reflection than they would make the most trivial contract with a fellow-creature. For Baptism was not the ordinance of man; it is a *sacrament instituted by Christ Himself*. The words of the text are the words of the Lord of life Himself. This alone ought to be sufficient to ensure our obedience. To all His commandments He has applied the rule, that obedience to them is an indispensable evidence of our love to Him; and

that if we obey not His commands, and profess to love Him, we are only deceiving ourselves. But here is a command given under circumstances, and connected with advantages, that not only would aggravate the ingratitude and irreverence of despising it, but also would evince the highest degree of infatuation and blindness to our own most important interests. Every imaginable circumstance, which could impart solemnity to this ordinance, and show its sacred and indispensable character, attended its institution. The Apostles, the first Bishops of Christ's Church, were, after His resurrection from the dead, specially summoned to meet Him, at a particular spot. Their commission was formally conferred upon them, after an express declaration, that *all power* had been given to Him "*in heaven and in earth.*" The authority to admit persons into the Ark of His Church is then declared in these terms, and upon these conditions: "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, BAPTIZING them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them *to observe all things* whatsoever I have commanded you. And, lo, *I am with you to the end of the world.*"

No unprejudiced person, reading this solemn institution of baptism, could suppose that Jesus regarded it as one which was to be despised with impunity, or not to be of the highest importance to His Church. If there could be a doubt on this subject, His own awful declaration, recorded by St.

Mark, must at once put an end to it: "*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned*"¹. Can any man take the Bible as his director, and doubt the necessity of Baptism? The Apostles, who received this ordinance, evidently entertained no doubt whatsoever upon the subject. We find them always reverently and scrupulously using it, as the sacramental means of admitting their converts into covenant with Christ. A well known and conclusive example of this occurs in the answer of St. Peter, when the multitude (impressed with his discourse, and having been made to feel the danger in which they were involved, and the necessity of having recourse to the means of salvation) earnestly applied to him and his fellow Apostles for counsel; "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" St. Peter's answer, in the name of all the Apostles, is prompt and decisive: "Repent," he said, "and be *baptized* every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for *the remission of sins*, and ye shall receive *the gift of the Holy Ghost*"². Three thousand, that very day, followed the gracious counsel; and when, on subsequent occasions, they received persons into the Church, constant mention is made of Baptism (as the means of so doing), with a particularity which is very remarkable. And, from the ascension of Jesus down to our own times, there is in the Church

¹ Mark xvi. 16.² Acts ii. 38.

of Christ no tradition more universal and unquestioned, than the invariable use of this sacrament, as the means of admission to the covenanted mercies of the Gospel.

In what has hitherto been urged I have dwelt more particularly upon the authority of the ordinance—the dignity and power of that Lord by whom it was instituted, and the importance which He evidently attached to it, by the solemn and impressive circumstances of its institution. But there is another point of view in which it may be regarded; namely, the *deep interest* which we have in observing it, and the great and precious *promises* attached to it. As St. Peter's converts had but recently acknowledged their Lord, and were, therefore, less likely to be impressed with motives based on reverence of His authority, than with a sense of their own *peculiar* condition, and of the *advantages* they were to derive from entering into His service, this Apostle, with sound judgment, passes lightly over the former motive, but prominently puts forward the latter: he tells them that on being baptized in the name of Jesus, they shall receive *remission of sins*, and the *gift of the Holy Ghost*.

There is no reason why we, having considered the necessity and authority of this sacrament, should not profit by these additional motives of self-interest and self-preservation suggested by St. Peter's words. To the desire of obedience springing from gratitude and duty to our Lord, we, there-

fore, add the encouragement to be derived from the *benefits* of which He has been pleased to *assure* us in that sacrament. Not only does St. Peter assert this promise, but Jesus Himself, as we have before stated, says, "he that believeth and is *baptized* shall be *saved*." And again, to Nicodemus He makes the declaration, "Except a man be born of *water* and the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." In these declarations, and St. Peter's, we have the promise of remission of sins, of the gifts of the Holy Ghost, of salvation, and admission to the kingdom of God, annexed to Baptism, which is the means through which God covenants to impart these blessings, and requires his people to seek them. It must be then our highest, our all-important, interest, to obey this ordinance of Christ, and to secure the blessings to which it may finally lead. I say, *may finally* lead ; for though Baptism, where it may be had, is represented in these passages, and received by the Church, as a means of grace and salvation, necessary and effectual for *entrance* into the Church of Christ ; yet this does not exclude the addition of other means of grace, and the requirement of certain duties for our *continuance* in that Church, and our perseverance till we shall obtain its crown in heaven. It places man in what the Catechism describes as a "*state* of salvation ;" that is, in a state in which they *may*, but not *must*, be finally saved. They have remission of sins, and are received into the kingdom of God ; but they will

not remain in it, unless their faith and conduct shall be worthy of the vocation wherewith they are called. This St. Peter very carefully explains to the disciples. Speaking of the wonderful preservation of Noah and his family in the ark, he says, "these eight souls were saved by water; the like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us, (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the *answer of a good conscience towards God*) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ."

He tells us here, that *inward purity* is signified and represented by the outward washing with water; and, to enable us to do *our part* in this respect, the sanctifying grace of the Holy Ghost is one of the covenanted benefits of this sacrament. For Baptism is a sacrament, and consists (as is concisely mentioned in the Catechism) of two parts, "an *outward visible sign*," and "an *inward spiritual grace*." By the "outward and visible sign," is meant something which can be seen and perceived by our bodily senses, and which is used to figure and represent to our imagination something spiritual, which we cannot see or perceive by our bodily senses. In Baptism, water, which we can see, and of which we experience the effects upon our bodies, is the outward and visible sign, to represent to us the benefits and advantages which, in this ordinance, are conferred upon our souls. As water cleanses and purifies the body, so Baptism (not by any natural effect, but by the ordinance and promise of

Christ, and by the power of the Holy Spirit) cleanses and purifies the soul. This purifying the soul, this washing away the guilt of our sinful and corrupt nature, this reception of us into the ark of Christ's Church, from that terrible sentence, which, like the deluge, covered the whole earth, is described in the Catechism as "a *death* unto sin, and a *new birth* unto righteousness; for being by nature born in sin, and the children of wrath, we are hereby made the children of grace." We are hereby, our Church teaches, *born again* to a new life.

"All men" (says the late Bishop of Winchester, in his exposition of the article on Baptism,) "being, through the disobedience of our first parents, subject to death, the rite of Baptism, by which we are admitted into the religion of Jesus, who hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light, is, with great propriety, called a sign of regeneration. The original corruption of our nature is thus washed away, and we are born again to new hopes and new prospects, as is represented in St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, in which he says, 'that we are buried with him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.' And to Titus he says, 'According to his mercy He saved us by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost.' By Baptism we become dead unto

sin, but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. We put off the old man with his deeds, and put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him. Thus is the inward effect of Baptism constantly asserted in Scripture. We are said to be born again of water and of the Spirit, which are frequently mentioned together; the one applied externally, the other operating internally. Baptism, therefore, is not a mere external badge, or token, of our being Christians; it is a new birth from the death of sin, and a regeneration to a new life in Christ; it is a change and renovation of nature by the spirit and grace of God; it is an infusion of spiritual life into the soul, by which it is made capable of performing spiritual actions, and of living unto God."

Baptism then was ordained by Christ as a *means* of our receiving those benefits, of which water figures the nature to our minds. But the Catechism teaches, that it is also "a *pledge*, to *assure* us" of those benefits, or of that inward and spiritual grace, signified or shown by the outward sign of washing with water. And this brings us to the last peculiarity of Baptism, to which your attention will be directed in this discourse.

Baptism, you will remember, is the means of your admission into *covenant* with Christ, and water He has appointed to be the *seal* of that covenant. It thus becomes a *pledge*, assuring us of the benefits

promised to us in the covenant. Water applied by the “ministers and stewards of God’s mysteries,” under His authority and commission, is of the same meaning and import as the setting of the hand and seal to a contract, either by one of the parties, or by one *lawfully empowered* to sign and seal in *his name*. It is the *seal* with which Christ’s Apostles and Ministers have been solemnly empowered to ratify, in His name, the covenant of mercy and grace with those who should be desirous of sharing its blessings; giving to those thus sealed the pledge of their Master, and assuring those entering into this covenant of the promises made in it.

Now this draws us directly to the chief object of our discourse, the connexion of Baptism with *Confirmation*.

Water is the seal of a covenant; but a covenant implies two parties, at least, to it, and usually something promised to be performed on both sides.

There may be also something required by the party granting the privileges of the covenant from the other, without the faithful performance of which the latter will finally forfeit those privileges. This, though a *condition* of the covenant, may not be in the nature of an *equivalent*, or *price* given, for the privileges. These privileges may be of pure grace and favour, granted by the bounty of the Donor. But the condition He requires, though not the price of the favour covenanted, may be one, in default of which the receiver may cease to be a fit

object of the favour, may incur a forfeiture of the privileges, and, by a breach of the covenant, render it of none effect in his case. If a man claim the privileges of a covenant, he must comply with its terms, and fulfil his part of it.

Now let us apply these principles to Baptism. Therein we have an outward and visible *sign* of an inward and spiritual grace; the sign, or seal, ordained by Christ, is *water*; and His ministers are lawfully empowered by Him, as our text declares, to affix this sign, or seal, "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." But this sign or seal, as we have shown, is a pledge not only assuring us, on the truth of God, to the blessings of the Gospel covenant, but also, by its very figurative signification, *binding us* to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called; with that purity and faith which becomes those born again to the hopes, and assured of the advantages and helps, of that covenant.

The minister, therefore, before he seals on behalf of his Master, declares the *engagements* entered into by those, who desire to become partakers of this covenant of grace. What is required of persons to be baptized, as their part of the covenant, may be best answered in the words of the Catechism:—" *Repentance*, whereby they forsake sin; and *faith*, whereby they stedfastly believe the promises of God made to them, in that sacrament." But, if repentance and faith be required, there very

naturally arises the question of the Catechism—"why then are *infants* baptized, when, by reason of their *tender age*," they cannot perform either of the conditions, that is, they cannot have either repentance or faith? The answer to this question comes home directly to our present subject, the connexion of Baptism with *Confirmation*.

Infants, though they cannot *themselves* give the pledge required by the Church, are nevertheless baptized, "because they promise them both," (that is, *both* the conditions—*repentance* and *faith*) "by their *sureties*, which promise, when they come to *age*, themselves are *bound to perform*."

They give to the ministers of the visible church the best public pledge and acknowledgment, of which the circumstances of the case admit; and they are bound to the Lord of the Church, to perform these conditions on pain of forfeiting the privileges of the covenant, then sealed to them. The Godfathers and Godmothers become *sureties*, pledging themselves to the Church and in the presence of God, that they will, according to their best ability, see that the children be brought up with such knowledge, as may enable them to understand the engagement which has been made for them, and may induce them, when of sufficient age, to take it upon themselves, and so to fulfil it, that they may finally secure all its blessings.

It is not intended, by this regulation, to withdraw the responsibility and office of Christian

education from the hands of parents, where it ought always to be vested ; but to give additional solemnity to the engagement, and to provide an *additional* security, in case of the parents' death, or of their being negligent of this duty, or too ignorant, or too wicked, to be sensible of its importance.

The sponsors are bound, and in the early ages of the church great stress was laid on their obligation, to see that the children be "brought up to lead a godly and a Christian life." The office they undertake (in whatever light they may choose to regard it) is very serious and responsible. They may be considered as pledging themselves to God for the child, as Judah pledged himself to Jacob for Benjamin :—"I will be *surety* for him ; of my hand shalt thou require him. If I bring him not unto thee, and set him before thee, then let me *bear the blame* for ever."

They do not quite undertake to set him before God, and to bring him unto God ; but they do engage to *endeavour* to the best of their power so to do. And if the child, to their knowledge, grows up in ignorance and wickedness, without any effort on their part to prevent it, and to acquaint him with the nature of the pledge given in his name, then they will deserve to "bear the blame for ever."

But that the sponsors may, in due time, be released from their pledge, and the infants baptized may themselves solemnly before the congregation declare their assent to the vows made for them,

personally express their resolution to fulfil their part, and personally claim the benefits of the covenant,—the rite of *Confirmation* is appointed. Thus is Confirmation connected with Baptism. Confirmation itself will form the subject of the next Sermon.

SERMON XXIX.

ON CONFIRMATION.

THE PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY and everliving God, we humbly beseech thy Majesty, that, as thy only-begotten Son was presented in the temple, in substance of our flesh, so we may be presented unto thee with pure and clean hearts, by the same thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Acts viii. 14—17.

NOW WHEN THE APOSTLES WHICH WERE AT JERUSALEM HEARD THAT SAMARIA HAD RECEIVED THE WORD OF GOD, THEY SENT UNTO THEM PETER AND JOHN; WHO, WHEN THEY WERE COME DOWN, PRAYED FOR THEM THAT THEY MIGHT RECEIVE THE HOLY GHOST. FOR AS YET HE WAS FALLEN UPON NONE OF THEM: ONLY THEY WERE BAPTIZED IN THE NAME OF THE LORD JESUS. THEN LAID THEY THEIR HANDS ON THEM, AND THEY RECEIVED THE HOLY GHOST.

THE preceding sermon treated of Baptism, with the special intention of showing its connexion with *Confirmation*¹. We are now to consider the ordi-

¹ This sermon is compiled chiefly from Shepherd on the Common Prayer, and from the Tracts published by the Society

nance of Confirmation itself; and the following heads will afford us the opportunity of giving a tolerably comprehensive and practical view of it.

I. The manner in which it is administered in the Church of England.

II. The grounds upon which she has appointed its administration.

III. The benefits to be derived from it.

IV. The qualification and duties required of those to be confirmed.

V. The persons interested in the observance of it.

I. Confirmation appears to take its name from its connexion with Baptism. The parties come personally forward before God and the congregation, to ratify and *confirm* the vows made for them in their Baptism, and to declare their resolution evermore to perform faithfully their part of the covenant, into which they were then admitted.

This is done under circumstances of peculiar solemnity. The Bishop, one of the highest order of ministers in the Church of Christ, puts the question to the candidates for Confirmation,—“*Do you, here in the presence of God and of this congregation, renew the solemn promise and vow that was made in your name at your Baptism ;* RATIFYING AND CON-

for Promoting Christian Knowledge, generally adopting their materials, and sometimes their words. I do not mark those passages as quotations, because I have seldom transcribed them word for word, and this acknowledgment may be sufficient, and save useless trouble.

FIRMING *the same in your OWN PERSONS, and acknowledging yourselves bound to believe, and to do, all things which your Godfathers and Godmothers then undertook for you ?*" To which every one is directed to answer in an audible voice " I do."

Then follow some versicles, or short sentences, expressing our dependence upon God, giving Him the glory, and imploring His attention to the prayers we are to offer.

The first prayer is in conformity with the sentiments of the early Christian church ; that at Baptism the grace conferred was sufficient to cleanse us from the pollution of original sin ; but that at Confirmation a more abundant increase of grace was vouchsafed, and additional spiritual strength was given. The prayer accordingly acknowledges former mercies, " regeneration and forgiveness of sins," in Baptism. It then petitions, that they, on whom the Bishop lays his hands, may be *strengthened* with the Holy Ghost the Comforter, and that God will "*daily give the increase of grace,*" and the seven-fold gifts of the Spirit.

The resolution of the persons to be confirmed, to take upon themselves the vows and engagements made in their names, being declared, and the prayer for power to fulfil it being offered, the Bishop then proceeds to the ceremony of the *laying on of his hands upon them*. This act denotes the authority and commission of the Bishop, to *convey* the blessing of God to them. But the Church carefully

guards against the misunderstanding of this authority and commission. There is no pretence that the Bishop himself is the fountain from which the blessing springs: he humbly beseeches *God*, the Giver of all grace, to defend those on whom the hands are laid, *with His heavenly grace*, that they may continue for ever, and daily increase in His Holy Spirit, until they come to His everlasting kingdom.

The office proceeds with prayer, that this rite may not be an empty, and unmeaning ceremony; but that when the *Bishop's* hands shall be withdrawn, removed, and himself no longer present, the hand of *God* may be over all those confirmed, and His Holy Spirit always with them, producing fruits in virtue and holiness of life. The Bishop concludes with his solemn Benediction.

II. On what grounds has our Church appointed this rite?

She has authority to decree rites and ceremonies; but she is bound, and has always been especially careful, to see that they be not only edifying, but also conformable to the spirit of the Gospel, the principles of apostolic rule, and the best authenticated opinions and practices of the primitive church. In all these respects, Confirmation will be found to justify her appointment. Its forms are according to ancient Scriptural usage, and its use and intention sanctioned by the clearest evidence.

The ceremony of laying on of hands as a *sign* of

conferring *Divine Blessing*, or of investing the person on whom their hands were laid with *office* or *privileges*, is of great antiquity, and described in Scripture as used on the most solemn occasions. For example, when Joseph brought his two children to receive their grandfather's dying benediction, this was the ceremony employed. The simple but sublime account of that event in the book of Genesis, may suggest some notion of the veneration attached to the ceremony. The aged Patriarch, feeling that he was now to be gathered to his fathers, exerted himself to go through this important and affecting office. Raising himself in his bed, and *laying his right hand upon Ephraim's head, and his left hand upon that of Manasseh*, he exclaimed, "God—before whom my fathers, Abraham and Isaac, did walk—the God which fed me all my life long unto this day—the Angel which redeemed me from all evil—*bless the lads!* And let *my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac*; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth."

Again, on another occasion, equally august and solemn, the formal appointment of a successor to Moses, we find the same ceremony used. And it has been justly observed, that the history records the significant nature of the ceremony, the direct connexion of it with the blessing which it both represented and conveyed. The power and privilege is expressly stated to have followed, and to

have been given by, the laying on of hands. "Joshua," says the inspired writer, "was *filled* with the spirit of wisdom ; *for* Moses had *laid his hands upon him* ; and the children of Israel *hearkened* unto him, and did as the Lord commanded Moses."

This will be sufficient evidence from the Old Testament, of the antiquity and use of the "laying on of hands." In the New also, similar instances abound. In healing the sick, ordaining to the ministry, appointing deacons, and conveying gifts of the Spirit, or offices in the church. Every reader of the New Testament must know, that "the laying on of hands" is a practice frequently mentioned. These, however, are only general examples, to show the scriptural acknowledgment, that gifts and dispensations of spiritual grace and power, were conferred by the laying on of the hands of God's servants. Not that we are to suppose, that the mere action of "laying on of hands" would operate as a charm or spell to produce these effects, but that it was an impressive and significant rite, denoting the authority of the minister, and, by the *ordinance of God*, made the channel of conveying his blessings. The hands, first upraised, point to heaven, as the only source, from which all authority and every blessing must be derived ; and then, falling upon the head of the person, eloquently figure the blessing descending on him from the hand of the Almighty.

Now let us advance a step nearer to our point,

and, from considering the general examples of the ceremony of "laying on of hands," next contemplate it, as applied to the particular case before us ; as used for the very purpose for which the Church of England appoints it to be used—as a sequel to Baptism, or, in one word, *Confirmation*.

Our text is a case in point. After the descent of the Holy Ghost upon the Apostles on the day of Pentecost, they preached the Gospel and baptized. The inferior ministers did the same. Philip in particular, who is supposed to have been the second of the seven deacons, and next to Stephen, preached and baptized many at *Samaria*. These converts partook of *all* the privileges and benefits conferred by Baptism. Still it is evident that the Apostles held something more to be requisite. For the text distinctly states, that "when the *Apostles* which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them *Peter and John* ; who, when they were come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Ghost (for as yet He was fallen upon none of them, *only* they were *baptized* in the name of the Lord Jesus). Then *laid they their hands* on them, and they received the Holy Ghost." Now if some additional ministration had not been necessary, for what reason should two Apostles have gone from Jerusalem to Samaria, to lay their hands upon those who had been already baptized ? It was not necessary that they should be baptized again ; but, to adopt

the words of Hooker, who describes the practice, and speaks the language of the primitive church, it was necessary to add to Baptism imposition of hands, with effectual prayer, for the illumination of God's most Holy Spirit, to *confirm* and *perfect* that which the grace of the same Spirit had already *begun* in Baptism.

And that it may not be inferred, that in this case Confirmation was necessary, only because those, who *baptized*, were not *Apostles*, we have the fact that Paul himself, when he had baptized the disciples at Ephesus, "*laid his hands* upon them, and the Holy Ghost came upon them." And there is a very remarkable passage in the Epistle to the Hebrews, in which St. Paul appears not only to describe Confirmation as a fundamental point of Christian doctrine, but also to speak of it in such an order, as implies its association with Baptism. He says, "Leaving, therefore, the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith towards God, of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment¹."

The case is clear as to the practice of the Apostles themselves; and Shepherd quotes the authority

¹ It might be questioned whether the "laying on of hands," in this passage, referred to Confirmation, or to any other case in which the ceremony is used. But Shepherd very conclusively reasons from the context, that it can refer to nothing else.

of Cyprian, an early Christian writer, for asserting that the practice of the Apostles in this respect is not a mere example, but a *rule* and *precedent* for the Church to follow.

That the Church did follow the rule and precedent, and has continued to do so to the present day, a cloud of witnesses may be adduced to prove; but our plan and limits will not admit¹ of the introduction of passages from the fathers to this effect. I select a single example from the father above named, and quoted by Shepherd. He declares that, "where any one has been baptized, he must not be baptized again. What is wanting must be supplied by prayer, *imposition of hands*, and invocation of the Holy Ghost."

III. Proceed we next to state the benefits to be derived from Confirmation.

These benefits have been, in some degree, already set forth, in stating the effects, which all the examples of Scripture, and of the primitive church, we have quoted, uniformly describe to follow the laying on of hands, and which are represented by that action. The blessings of God, and the gifts of the Spirit, are declared to be thus conveyed. These are very important, indeed, all important. But there are others incidentally connected with it, and

¹ Those who wish authorities on this point, will find them in Shepherd, Hooker, Taylor, and in a more accessible and very comprehensive little tract on Confirmation, by the Rev. D. J. Eyre.

by no means to be despised. It affords a stimulus to exertion, by the publicity and solemnity of the act, by which we ratify and confirm, before God and the congregation, the engagements entered into in our name at our baptism. It is an earnest call to holy resolution, and to acquaint ourselves, in the outset of the journey of life, with that powerful Protector, and that unerring Guide, who will conduct us through its difficulties and perils, to the home eternal in the heavens. This we shall the more clearly perceive, as we consider the next head of our discourse.

IV. The qualifications and duties required of those to be confirmed.

As in Confirmation you take upon yourselves the vows made for you in your Baptism, and pledge yourselves to the fulfilment of your part in the covenant then entered into, in your name, you must know what those vows were, and what are the obligations you undertake to fulfil. The promises made by your godfathers and godmothers in your name, are classed under three general heads; what you should *renounce*, what you should *believe*, and what you should *do*. For the use of those to be confirmed, and to assist them in acquiring a general knowledge of those things, the Church has appointed a Catechism containing a brief and summary sketch of Christian faith and duty. This, at *least*, every candidate for Confirmation ought to have learned. Not, however, that your acquaintance with religion

is to terminate here ; but you are to look upon this as a step in your Christian course, and to go on increasing in all knowledge, and in all truth.

That those, however, may not be admitted to Confirmation, who are not qualified with the requisite elementary knowledge, the minister of each parish is directed to examine the candidates, and to certify, when he is satisfied of the fact, that they have sufficient knowledge of their duty. But there is one point, on which the minister cannot form a judgment, and in which a failure will annul all the advantages to be derived from Confirmation. The minister may ascertain whether the candidate *knows* his duty ; but who can tell whether he sincerely means to *do* it ?

Herein he must be left to God, and his own conscience. And let him beware how he attempts to mock God by an hypocritical form and pretence, when, in his heart, he has not any fixed intention to act up to his professions, and perhaps has scarcely formed any clear notion of his obligations. The hand of the Bishop may descend upon the head of such a person, but the blessing of God will not. To him all the hopes and promises of the Christian covenant will become a dead letter. He has broken the covenant.

V. The last point to be considered is, Who are the persons interested in the observance of this rite ? Two parties are interested in it, namely, *the sponsors* and the *persons baptized*.

The interest, which the godfathers and godmothers have in this rite, is, that they may fulfil the engagement into which they entered with God and the Church, to bring the persons baptized to the Bishop, for the purpose of taking upon themselves the vows made in their name. They undertook to see that those, for whom they promised, should be *taught* what they should renounce, believe, and do; and, when so instructed, brought to God, and the Church. And, if they neglect this duty, they must themselves still "bear the blame."

Let them, therefore, endeavour to urge upon those baptized, how great are the interests to which the covenant, entered into in their names, relates, and how earnestly they should press forward to take it personally on themselves. The call to Confirmation is an invitation, to ratify the covenant entered into in our name. To refuse this ratification is, in effect, at least to show indifference to the blessings and privileges of Baptism, if not absolutely to reject them. It is a virtual refusal, to pledge ourselves to fulfil the terms required of those who would receive the final rewards of that Church, into which Baptism initiates us. We refuse our part, we nullify the contract, we will not confess our Master before the Church on earth; and how can we expect Him to acknowledge us before the Church in heaven?

But Confirmation, independently of the advantages of Baptism which it secures, evidently, according to the effects which followed the Apostolic admi-

nistration of it, and the opinions of the primitive church, brings benefits of its own, which deserve to be highly prized. On those, who thus obey the voice of the Church, she prays for the gifts of the Holy Ghost; and doubtless the Great Lord of the Church will not suffer the prayers, and the hands of His Bishops, to descend in vain upon the heads of their faithful disciples. His Holy Spirit, by whom the "whole body of the Church is governed and sanctified," will not be wanting, in the apostolical ordinance, to pour down the abundance of His power, and arm and strengthen the Christian soldier for his conflict with the world, the flesh, and the devil. May you all, to whom (not having been confirmed) these considerations shall be addressed, be impressed with their importance, and come to the Bishop, as the Church directs, to *confirm* and ratify the covenant made in your name in Baptism. And when the Bishop, "after the example of the Apostles, shall have laid his hands on you, to certify you (by this sign) of God's favour and gracious goodness towards you, may God's fatherly hand be ever over you; may His Holy Spirit be ever with you, and so lead you in the knowledge and obedience of His word, that you may obtain everlasting life through our Lord Jesus Christ¹."

¹ See Collect for Confirmation Service.

SERMON XXX.

NAAMAN'S EXAMPLE APPLIED TO CONFIRMATION.

THE PRAYER.

O ALMIGHTY GOD, who hast built thy Church upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the head corner-stone; Grant us so to be joined together in unity of spirit by their doctrine, that we may be made an holy temple acceptable unto thee; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

2 KINGS v. 12.

ARE NOT ABANA AND PHARPAR, RIVERS OF DAMASCUS, BETTER
THAN ALL THE WATERS OF ISRAEL? MAY I NOT WASH IN THEM,
AND BE CLEAN?

THE pride of the human heart is always at work. It too often blinds men to the real tendency of their principles. In no respect does it exhibit itself more strongly and dangerously than in that jealousy of authority, which frequently leads men, under the notion that they are asserting their independence and freedom, to surrender themselves to the worst

of slavery—the slavery of passion and irreligion. For example: with what eagerness, to what a blind and dangerous excess, do we see the right of private judgment asserted! And how captivating is the argument, “I have a *right* to judge according to my own reason and conscience—I will not be bound by what others have determined—It is my undoubted privilege to form my religious opinions and conduct on my own judgment.” There is, undoubtedly, a general truth in these propositions; but as they are expressed (and they are expressed according to the prevailing and popular notion), they do not express the *whole* truth. It is true,—you have the right of private judgment; but you must remember that you *exercise* that right at your *peril*. That right has *limits* assigned to it, by the laws of both God and man, which you are bound to respect upon pain of incurring the penalties decreed by the one or the other against the transgressors of those limits. Moreover, that private judgment has its proper province, beyond which the exercise of supposed right becomes not the assertion of independence, or the use of reason, but folly, presumption, rebellion, and sin. Let us illustrate this by a parallel case.

The Sovereign and the Parliament have authority to *frame* laws; the Judges are appointed to *administer*, and to *interpret*, those laws. A man may assert, that he has the *right* of private judgment in respect of those laws; and he may, if he think fit,

consider himself as wiser than all the authorities, and despise both legislators and judges, and act in defiance of the laws. But if he chooses to exercise this right, he will do so at his *peril*; he must take the consequences, and suffer punishment. Now we may suppose a case to arise in which human laws may be opposed to divine, and that a man, after *deep consideration* of the case, and being properly *qualified* for such an inquiry, comes to that conclusion, and chooses to obey God rather than man. We may pity and admire such a man taking the consequences of the exercise of the right of private judgment, and rejoicing, as the Apostles did, “to suffer shame for the name of Jesus.” Such a man would commit a legal offence, but not incur moral guilt.

But if a *wilful* or an *ignorant* man, without either *inquiry*, or *qualifications* to judge, or without any adequate occasion for opposing the law, shall think fit to act upon what he terms his right of private judgment, upon his own interpretation and opinion of the laws; then, independently of the question, whether the law to which he refused obedience were a good or a bad law, whether the legislators and judges were fit or unfit, his guilt would be incurred for the offence, of setting up his private judgment against the *authorized* enactors and expositors of the law. By God’s ordinance the law has a general claim to obedience, to which exceptions are not to be made but in cases sanctioned by His word. If the law were a *good* law, the absurdity of setting up pri-

vate judgment against it would be still more glaring. But if the offender were *neither qualified*, nor had taken the *necessary steps* to enable him to form a *competent* judgment, the offence, in a *moral* point of view, would remain the same, whether the law were good or bad. To oppose private judgment to the course of social law, would be a *legal* offence under any circumstances. To do so without *very strong* grounds, and a *well established* conviction that it was contrary to the law of God, would add to this legal offence *moral* guilt. And to do it without any inquiry at all, or without knowledge and qualification for making the examination, would, in a still greater degree, aggravate its *sinfulness*: and if the offender be punished for his pains, who will not admit that he deserves it, and is a foolish or wicked disturber of the peace of society? It would be the abuse, not the use, of the right of private judgment.

In like manner, if any person shall set up his private notions against those regulations of the Church, which, by her reasonable and scriptural authority to decree rites and ceremonies, provided they be not "*contrary* to God's word written," she enjoins, that man deserves the censures of the Church, and will also incur the wrath of the Church's Sovereign. A man is not to reduce regulations for the public conduct of any society (civil or religious) to the standard of his caprice. And especially odious and offensive will such a pretence of asserting the right of private judgment be, where it is set up against

the *express warrant* of Scripture, and God's own word. What can be thought of that man, who shall say, I cannot see *why* this or that should be so; when God Himself has expressly declared that so it shall be? Such a man will suffer, and will deservedly suffer, for this self-conceit and impiety; God and man will condemn him with a just judgment; his own conscience will, sooner or later, join in the sentence; and in the awful consequences to which his sin will lead, no consolation will present itself; but shame and remorse will echo from the depth of his heart, "THOU FOOL!" the just and awful reproach, which the Holy Spirit has attached to those who lean upon their own wisdom and devices, rather than yield a faithful submission to the counsels and decrees of Divine Wisdom.

The narrative from which the text is taken affords an instructive illustration of these truths, and exhibits a lively picture of the folly of a man's endeavouring to measure the counsels of the Most High by his own limited understanding, and to suppose that nothing is possible because he may not see the manner, and comprehend the reasons, by which God is guided in effecting it.

Naaman, captain of the host of the king of Syria, who had rendered most important services to his master's dominions, and was one of his most distinguished officers, was afflicted with a leprosy, a disease of the most distressing and loathsome character. During some inroads upon the land of

Israel, his troops had brought away captive a little maid, who was taken into Naaman's household, and waited upon his wife. She appears to have felt for his miserable situation, and declared that the means of cure were to be found, if Naaman would but bend himself to ask relief of God, through his *appointed servant*, and, in *faith* and *humility*, submit himself to the prophet's directions, whatsoever they might be. "Would God," said she, "my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! for he would cure him of his leprosy." These words were reported to Naaman, who, with the eagerness of one under a most horrible and disgusting disorder, was ready to have recourse to any quarter for a cure. He determined, therefore, to seek this man of God, and applied to his master, the king of Syria, for letters to the king of Israel, that he might be conducted to the prophet, and that the king of Israel might interest himself on his behalf, and command the prophet to cure him. For probably Naaman, and certainly the king of Syria, regarded the prophet's power of cure as belonging merely to the *man*, and not coming directly from the only God. The king of Syria, therefore, willing to satisfy Naaman, sent a letter to the king of Israel, haughtily commanding him to see that Naaman was cured. The king of Israel, who was in great fear of the king of Syria, and suspected that he wanted to pick a quarrel, and seek a pretence for invading him, was struck with consternation on the

receipt of this letter. But when Elisha, the man of God, had heard that the king of Israel had rent his clothes, he sent to the king, saying, "Wherefore hast thou rent thy clothes? Let him *come now to me*, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel." Here was the beginning of offence to Naaman. Elisha knew that the master whom he served was the King of kings, and seems to have been determined that Naaman should feel that he was so. Naaman was in his own country next to the king, and the highest subject. He was, doubtless, as his exploits showed, a man of great abilities, and of a very high spirit. His station commanded the deepest respect from the people, and the great services he had done the state, had made him the first favourite of the king. Every thing, therefore, in Syria, was, of course, subservient to him; and, in a despotic country, all persons were desirous to anticipate his wishes, to flatter his pride, and to obey him with the utmost reverence, and even servility. He came to Samaria, bearing the king of Syria's mandate to the king of Israel, and with a retinue suitable to his station. He might naturally expect that every thing would be at his beck; that the king of Israel would have instantly sent for the person desired, and that Elisha would hasten trembling to court the moment he should be acquainted with the station and character of the individual who required his aid; and more particularly so as he had brought presents of immense value to reward him,

if the cure should be effected. It could not then have been very pleasing to a man thus prepared to expect the utmost homage, that he should receive, instead of immediate and servile attendance, the dignified and almost haughty message of the prophet, sent through the king, and not communicated direct to himself,—“ Let him *come to me.*” The pride of this great man, this able general, this great chief, this mighty conqueror, must have suffered a rude shock, when he was thus unceremoniously required by the prophet to come to him. However, Naaman bent himself to the occasion, and perhaps to what he might consider as the caprice of the prophet; and he went with his chariot and his horses, and all his proud array, and stood at the door of Elisha’s humble mansion. It must have cost him some effort to have done this. But when Elisha would not condescend to invite him into the house, or even to come out and speak to him, but merely sent a messenger to him, saying, “ Go, and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean,” he could no longer restrain his wrath. “ Behold,” he exclaimed, “ I thought, He will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the Lord his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper. Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? May I not wash in them, and be clean?” He had in his own mind thought, that the prophet of God would take

this or that course; yet that this course was not taken, would not alone, it seems to me, have led to his wrath, and his angry rejection of the prophet's instructions. His pride was wounded at the unceremonious way in which he was treated; and he also looked at the *means* which were pointed out, as unsuited to the effect; not considering that *God alone* could produce the effect; and that his reasons for producing it through those means are matters for His judgment, and not for ours. He remembered that he had finer rivers in his own country than those of Israel; and he could not understand why a river of Israel should be of any use to him. He was therefore going away in a rage; but fortunately for him, his servants took a more dispassionate view of the matter, and respectfully put to him the following sensible question:—"If the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? how much rather then when he saith unto thee, Wash, and be clean?" Naaman's rage having subsided, he saw the reasonableness of the remark: he saw that he had come to consult the man of God, and yet that he had, instead of submitting to his judgment, set up his own against it, which, if he intended to depend on, he might as well have spared himself the trouble of coming to him at all. Heathen though he was, and though for a moment blinded with pride and passion, yet he felt the wisdom of the advice given him by his servants, and became sensible that he was ignorant

and presumptuous, when he acted as though he were superior in knowledge and judgment to the man whose counsel and assistance he came to receive. He felt that he had been guilty of pride and stubbornness, and he therefore changed his mind ; he humbled himself, and believed the word of *God's servant*, and went and did what Elisha had directed him to do. His *faith* made him clean ; and he became more and more conscious of his fault, in setting up his own judgment in a matter in which he was not competent to decide, and he hastened back to the prophet to acknowledge his error, and to express his gratitude for the mercy he had experienced.

May his example open the eyes of others, who, though Christians, and with greater means of knowledge than fell to Naaman's lot, are guilty of the same fault. How many persons, and those generally the most weak and ignorant, who have never given themselves the trouble to study and examine the subject, and who probably are least qualified to do so ; how many such persons are apt to question the necessity of those means which *God's word* has pointed out for our salvation and edifying ! Such people ask, What good can such an ordinance do me ? I do not see why it should be appointed. I can do very well without it ; if I shall not be saved without it, I shall not be saved with it. These observations and conclusions are put forth with great confidence, generally by people who have

studied and thought least, and are also least qualified to form a true judgment upon the subject. For those who think deeply, and are well informed, will be the last persons to oppose, or treat with levity, ordinances established by God, or commended by the authority of His Church.

Let us follow up these considerations by citing two or three cases in the practice of Christians of the present day, in which Naaman's error is apt to prevail.

Its first and most obvious application is to the rite of Baptism. Though this rite was solemnly enjoined by Jesus himself, and has been religiously observed by the Church from His time to the present, yet there have been persons who, instead of obeying, have raised controversies upon its uses, and other subjects connected with it. When God says, "Wash and be clean," man refuses, and seeks some plan of his own, resorts to the Abana and Pharpar of his own presumption. He must have the reason as well as the command. Faith he holds to be an undue submission. But can any thing be more audacious and foolish than to refuse, when God says only "wash and be clean,"—be baptized with water and the Spirit? Ought we not rather to rejoice that no greater thing is required of us?

But this is not a common case. I will pass on to that in which we are now more immediately concerned; namely, Confirmation. We can prove (as in a former discourse I showed) from God's own

word, that the ceremonial of laying on of hands is founded upon a custom of most remote antiquity; that it was employed by the Apostles themselves on various solemn occasions, and particularly in the case of those who had been baptized in Samaria, for a purpose similar to that for which we now employ it in Confirmation. We can show, that the practice may be traced in the Church from the earliest ages of the Christian religion; we can show the reasonable and suitable character of it. Yet there are persons who, without having either learning or opportunity to search into the question, think themselves sufficiently wise to decry the ordinance, simply because they say *they* do not see *why* they should be benefited by it. There are, indeed (as I trust on a former occasion has been proved), a great many, and good, reasons for its appointment, and many useful purposes to which it answers, and which, if these objectors see them not, are hid from them only by their own ignorance, or want of thought. But even if there were no such reasons, and advantages, which they might discover by proper attention, still that would never justify their contempt of these ordinances, which are appointed for our edification. Are not the silly questions, "Why cannot I be saved without this? how will the Bishop's hands profit me?" just as presumptuous and weak as Naaman's question, "Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? may I not wash in them, and be clean?"

If they were better, they were not the means ordained by God, who is sole judge of the means by which He will convey His blessings. Wiser surely would be the counsel which humble Christians would offer, than such vain objections.

The spirit of Naaman's servants showed more true wisdom than their master's foolish and petulant question, "Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? may I not wash in them, and be clean?" No, he could not; it was not the *river* of Israel, nor those of Damascus, that could cleanse him; but the *will* and the *power* of God, *ordaining* that the river of His *chosen land* should be the *means*: and so long as Naaman set up his own passions, and understanding, against that will and power, *not all the waters of the world* would have cleansed him.

The last case to which I shall refer, and in which we may observe principles and conduct not altogether unlike Naaman's, is the frequent neglect of the Lord's Supper. The word of God describes us as corrupt and frail beings; as having fallen under the sentence of God's wrath; as being placed in a world full of dangers and temptations, and having to proceed through a course beset on every side with spiritual and active foes. It teaches, moreover, that when our souls were forfeited through our transgressions, that they were redeemed by the blood of Jesus, who suffered on the cross for our sins; that we still require continual strengthening and support

from above, to enable us to secure our final entrance to Christ's kingdom in heaven. It teaches also, that our blessed Saviour, the very night before He was betrayed, instituted a sacramental feast, to be observed, in grateful remembrance of His death and sufferings, and of those inestimable benefits which we thereby receive. It teaches us also, that this festival was never to be neglected so long as we remain on earth; that we are thus to show the Lord's death continually till He come. And, finally, we learn from the same source, that the observance of this sacrament is pressed upon us, not only from motives of gratitude to our crucified Saviour, but also as a means of our receiving continual supplies of that Divine aid, by which alone we can be enabled to contend against our spiritual enemies, or to save ourselves from being betrayed by our own corrupt passions. This sacrament, also, Christians in every age have acknowledged. Yet, my brethren, often has the invitation gone forth in every church, and been neglected by many! O let it not be any longer neglected by those, who may read this complaint, and whose consciences may warn them that they are guilty in this matter.

And if we look at the reasons assigned for this neglect, shall we not sometimes find them of the same stamp as Naaman's? Shall we not find them setting up their notions of what are to be the means and instruments of our salvation, against the exhortations of God's ministers, and the positive ordinances of

God's word? "*I thought*," (said Naaman, though he had been told by a man of God, and a prophet of the Most High, what he was to do,) "*I thought*, He will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the Lord his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper. Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? may I not wash in them, and be clean?"

And the disobedient Christian too will say, he does not see the necessity of receiving the Lord's Supper; that there is this or that circumstance in his case, which *he thinks*,—but which God has not *said*,—is a sufficient reason for his neglecting it, though Christ himself has said, "This *do* in remembrance of me,"—"Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you." Surely, it will be our wisdom humbly and thankfully to obey the ordinance and will of God, and to listen to the call of His Church. It is no great thing that He has commanded us. He bids us use the means of grace and edification, as easy as that which the prophet enjoined to Naaman: surely, instead of seeking our own devices, or setting up our own thoughts against His, we shall do well to obey.

May these counsels, my brethren, like that of Naaman's servants, direct your hearts, and induce you to render willing obedience to the ordinances of God, and to receive in faith the sacramental

means of grace which He has appointed. And may you, my brethren especially, who are preparing to devote yourselves to God in confirmation, ever remember whose service it is you embrace, and how entirely He demands the obedience of your whole heart, your whole mind, and all your faculties. May you endeavour to carry into effect the promises you take upon yourselves, of renouncing the world and its lusts, of believing all the articles of the Christian faith, of keeping God's holy will and commandments; not forgetting that the Supper of the Lord is appointed by Him as a means of grace and salvation. Let not your own vain imaginations, or the foolish ignorance of others, lead you to set up *your* understanding against God's commands; but let Christ be with you *all in all*. Give Him your hearts, and lean not to your own understandings. And may the "Almighty Lord and everlasting God vouchsafe to direct, sanctify, and govern both our hearts and bodies in the ways of His laws, and in the works of His commandments; that through His most mighty protection both here and ever, we may be preserved in body and soul, through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ ¹."

¹ Collect for the Confirmation Service.

SERMON XXXI.

ANANIAS A WARNING APPLICABLE TO CONFIRMATION.

THE PRAYER.

O LORD, who never failest to help and govern them whom thou dost bring up in thy stedfast fear and love ; Keep us, we beseech thee, under the protection of thy good providence, and make us to have a perpetual fear and love of thy holy Name ; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

ACTS v. 4.

THOU HAST NOT LIED UNTO MEN, BUT UNTO GOD.

IN the case of Ananias there are two points which must obviously present themselves to our consideration. The one is the terrible indignation of God against falsehood and hypocrisy ; and the other—what might be the causes of His visiting the sin, in this case, with miraculous punishment.

We find that Ananias, to a certain extent, had complied with a practice arising out of those feelings of brotherly love, which the Gospel peculiarly recommends, and of which, under the circumstances

of the infant Church, the Apostles deemed it necessary to encourage the impulses. The profession of the religion of the crucified Redeemer was, indeed, in those days a taking up the *cross*. Its weight was felt immediately; the converts were often stripped of all they possessed, and must have perished from want, if the liberality of their brethren had not interposed to save them. Many, therefore, placed their property in a common fund to assist these sufferers; and the Apostles very naturally felt desirous both that the sufferings of the persecuted brethren should be alleviated, and that the true spirit of their religion should shine forth in the bounty of those, who had means and inclination to contribute.

But, though this generous feeling was *encouraged* by the Apostles, there was no *compulsion*; every man might do as he pleased. St. Peter particularly observes to Ananias, that there was no constraint or necessity laid upon him, to give his whole property, and that he might have kept it, without attempting to impose upon them with a lie. "While it remained," said he, "was it not thine own; and, when it was sold, was it not in thine *own power*?" He might have done with it as he pleased; he need not have brought any; and if he had brought a part, it would have been accepted. It might, however, be concluded, from a hasty view of this subject, that the Apostles used this punishment as a means of terrifying their converts to bring in the whole of their property; and also that the severity of the

punishment of Ananias was not called for by the magnitude or enormity of the offence. We will, therefore, more attentively contemplate some of the particulars of this transaction, and observe both whether there were not strong and special reasons for the immediate and miraculous agency of God to punish Ananias, and also what reflexions the subject suggests, which may be adapted to general edification, and more particularly to the situation of those who are to be partakers of the *solemn ordinance of Confirmation*.

In general we may observe of Ananias, that, though he had embraced Christianity, his heart was not thoroughly engaged in the cause. He seems to have been one of those unstable Christians described by our Saviour, in the parable of the Sower and the Seed, under the figure of seed falling upon a rock, which, because it had no *depth* of earth, sprang up quickly, but had no root, and was soon withered beneath the heat of the mid-day sun. Such appears to have been Ananias' religion; he had heard the Gospel; he had been convinced of its truth; he had some sense of the awful dangers, and glorious rewards, which it revealed. The question, "What must I do to be saved?" had risen before his mind in strong and alarming characters; he had considered the answer, "Repent, and be baptized:" he had, at first, obeyed it; but his *root was not deep*. No sooner did the scorching heat of trial rise upon him, than his religion withered. He saw that those

who were hearty in the service of the Lord, gave up all that they had ; he was but a weak plant of Christianity ; he would not bear the sacrifice of his worldly goods ; he had put his hand to the plough, but he " looked back ;" he was offended, and fell away.

But such, it may be said, was the case with many *other* Christians ; and though they might *hereafter* be punished, yet there was nothing in their conduct that should call for *signal* or *immediate* punishment, or that should demand the *miraculous* interposition of God, to inflict upon him a death contrary to the ordinary lot of sinners. This remark is just, so far as only the guilt of the individual is concerned : we are not to conclude that it was merely for the general weakness of his Christian principles, or even for the mere sinfulness of his duplicity, that a *miraculous* punishment was inflicted. For these a miracle was not required ; for these, due inflictions awaited him in *that awful* day, when *all sinners*, all the *false* and *disobedient*, will receive according to their works. But the *miraculous* death which he suffered was connected with the *circumstances* of the Gospel dispensation, with its *evidences*, and with the *general success of its preachers*. The reason is distinctly set forth ; " he had lied not unto *men*, but unto *God*." But *how* not unto men ? Were not the Apostles men ? They were ; but they acted under, and were enlightened by, the *Spirit of God*. Here, then, we have, at once, the cause of this *miraculous* interfer-

ence of the Divine power. The very act of Ananias brought into question the *truth* of the Apostles' *inspiration*. It implied a disbelief, it was a *practical denial*, that they were endued with the *extraordinary gifts* of the Spirit; it showed a suspicion, that the *spirit*, which dwelt in them, was capable of being *deceived* and *imposed* upon. It showed that he expected, perhaps, to gain some of the general contribution, by *pretending* to have given up all that he had; or that he should derive from the Apostles some spiritual benefits, or at least some commendation, by persuading them of his zeal. But whatever were his views, it is clear they were built upon the hope of *deluding* the Apostles; or, in other words, the *Holy Ghost*, who directed them, and acted by them.

How then would their pretensions to divine inspiration have been maintained, had they been thus imposed upon? How would their assertions of their commission from God have been believed, if they could not have shown that they were informed of this base attempt? Or if it were admitted, that they knew it, were they to take a bribe, that the divine indignation should not be manifested against such deceit; and that it should not be known unto all men that the Spirit could detect, and would punish, falsehood?

In this view of the subject, indeed, one most important consideration presents itself to our mind. What prejudice might religion have suffered, had

the Apostles, claiming to be invested with power from on high, merely rejected the money, with a reproof, and without some signal mark of God's displeasure? The enemies of Christianity might have urged, and probably did urge, that the poverty of some Christians merely furnished the Apostles with a pretence for obtaining the disposal of the property of the wealthier part of their community; and that they were anxious for converts only, that they might have more wealth in the common stock, and under their control. How complete an answer was given by the fate of Ananias! It was not the *money*, but the *motive*, which had weight in the estimation of the Holy Spirit. No sooner did Ananias bring his gift, and with it offer an insult to the Spirit which dwelt in the Apostles, than awful and exemplary punishment followed. He was struck with instant death. It held out a terrible prohibition to all, to beware of expecting God to be propitiated with mere gifts; it cautioned all men to draw near with *their hearts*, or *not at all*; it distinctly showed, that what was done before the *Apostles*, was done before the *Spirit of God*; and that whoso lied unto them, lied not unto *man*, but unto *God*. The punishment, that is to say, the *miraculous* part of that punishment, must be looked upon as one of the *proofs* of the Apostles' commission, and of the truly spiritual nature of that religion which they were appointed to preach. It showed that they were not to be imposed upon, and

that they would hearken to no compromise between God and Mammon ; that they coveted no man's wealth ; but that in the name of their God they required an offering richer and purer than gold—a heart pious, honest, and sincere, devoted to the cause of religion, and animated with the hopes of salvation. This infliction upon Ananias was not the *ordinary* punishment of hypocrisy ; it was a *special* punishment, inflicted for a *special* purpose. God must not be expected to interpose miracles, when the reasons for which miracles were required, have long since ceased to exist. We are not now to expect the *immediate* visitations of God's justice upon falsehood.

The hypocrite may flourish for a time ; but there is a day of judgment ; and to that day we are directed to look for the complete vindication of God's ways, and the final operations of his justice. And, in this point of view, we may apply the case of Ananias to our edification.

Though we cannot suppose at present that God will work a miracle to punish wickedness and deceit, yet the example before us denotes the *indignation* which such conduct cannot fail to incur. The reasons for *miraculous* interposition may pass away with the circumstances which gave rise to them ; but *God's abomination* of hypocrisy and lying *never can pass away*. The case of Ananias displays to us the awful force of His displeasure, and for ever remains on record as a dreadful

warning against all false professions to Him. Bodily death is not the only penalty of sin, for death is common to all men. There are other, and far more terrible consequences of God's wrath revealed to us. Be cautioned then, my brethren, how you imitate the audacious falsehood and hypocrisy of Ananias ; beware, lest you lie unto God !

It may be asked how *we* can lie unto God ? *We*, it may be said, are not called upon, as Ananias was, to give an account before men endued with *extraordinary* gifts of the Spirit, or furnished with *miraculous* powers of discerning the truth or falsehood of our assertions. It is true you are not before *such* men ; but the ministers of your religion are still the ministers of *God*. They still are, as we have urged ¹, *His* ambassadors ; they still act in *His* name, and *under His authority*. They yet invite you, *under His commission*, to embrace and hold fast all the doctrines and precepts of His holy religion ; they call upon you to seek salvation under the banner of the cross ; they bid you be faithful soldiers and servants of Christ Jesus. Remember, too, that by your very attendance on the public ministrations of His religion, you *profess to obey* their call. But before whom do you profess this ? Is it only before God's ministers ? Is not God himself present in the midst of us ? Is He not about our path, and about our bed ? Are not the inmost thoughts of our hearts open to His view ?

¹ See Sermon. XVIII.

What notion then can we have of His power and wisdom and justice—what knowledge can we have of His revelation of that wrath which awaits those who call upon Him with their lips, while their heart is far from Him, if we suppose that He will not hereafter visit hypocrisy with just vengeance, because He may not think fit to work a *miracle* for its *immediate* punishment. It is to God that you address yourselves whenever you attend the public worship; it is before *Him* that you confess your sins. It is *Him* whom you implore to spare them that confess their faults, and restore them that are penitent. If then you have no sense of the danger of those sins, if you have no real intention of forsaking them, what can you suppose will be the result of such insincerity? To whom do you thus deceitfully and hypocritically lie? is it to man, or is it to God? He may not work a miracle for your punishment; but that punishment, though it *tarry long*, will come at last. Though the different circumstances of his dispensations may require different *means*, and different *times*, for the infliction of punishment, yet His *displeasure* at hypocrisy and insincerity, can *never be different*. The *same eye* which beheld, and the same hand which chastised the *falsehood of Ananias*, still beholds, and still menaces the mockery and insincerity of *every Christian* who appeals to His mercy, and yet contemptuously persists in defiance of His laws.

Now let us apply this to the subject of Confirmation. To such of you as intend to partake of that solemn ordinance—to devote yourselves to the service of God—to claim the benefits of the Gospel dispensation—to ask the aid of His Holy Spirit—to you all let me suggest the *awful nature* of the appeal you are to make; and the *great and all-seeing God* before whom you are to make it. The Bishop, as God's minister, will ask you "Whether you do, in the *presence of God* and of the congregation, renew the solemn promise and vow made in your name at your Baptism, ratifying and confirming the same in your own persons, and acknowledging yourselves bound to believe and to do all those things which your Godfathers and Godmothers then undertook for you?" You will answer, "I do." With what *hearts*, and with what *intentions*, you will respectively make that answer, no MAN can know; but we do know that if you do not answer in sincerity and truth, you will, like Ananias, "lie not unto *men*, but unto God." In the presence of God you will make that answer, and God surely, sooner or later, will not fail to punish those that *lie unto Him*.

We intreat all to weigh this well; both those who have been confirmed, and those who are to be confirmed. The promise you take upon yourselves, and the promise you *must* take upon yourselves, if you expect to share the blessings of Christ's kingdom, is, that you will *renounce* the

devil and all his works, the pomps and vanities of this wicked world, and all the sinful lusts of the flesh; that you will *believe* all the articles of the Christian faith; and that you will *keep* God's holy will and commandments, and walk in the same all the days of your life. Can any individual for one moment believe, that he may with impunity dare to insult the *All-seeing God* with such a promise as this, if he has *not seriously* resolved to *perform* it? Can he imagine, that after this promise, he is to *neglect* his duties to *God* and *man*? that he may continue swearing, blaspheming, despising the public worship of God, and profaning His holy name; that he may persist in idleness, drunkenness, and debauchery—in theft, or in slander—in lawlessness and in violence—or that he is not to study the word and the will of God, with a view to *adorn* the profession which he has embraced, and to secure the inheritance of that glorious kingdom, of which he is admitted a member? Surely, brethren, none can be so ignorant, as to suppose that this declaration is to consist in *mere words*, that this *confirmation* of our *baptismal* vow is to be an *empty ceremony*. Consider well what it is you are going to do: if you promise without meaning to *perform*, that promise will be a *deliberate* and a *daring lie*,—a lie too not *unto men*, but *unto God*. It will be a lie unto that God who struck Ananias with instant death; and who threatens with a far more awful

fate, those who will presume to dishonour and insult Him.

The *miracle* was not intended to show the mere *punishment* due to hypocrisy ; it chiefly showed that God's Spirit resided in the Apostles ; and could both detect and punish the deceitful. But other and more terrible judgments are held forth to the guilty. And though in the present day the miraculous power be not granted to the Bishop, neither can *he* discover, nor visit the false professor of the Gospel ; yet *God* still *can* and most assuredly will. The hand and the prayer of the Bishop will descend in *vain* upon the head of the hypocrite. The Spirit of God will not pour out His gifts upon *those*, who *lie to Him*, and intend not to *profit* by His graces. They will be left to their own hardened hearts ; they will have no part with Christ ; they will go on in their own devices ; they will be left in a situation as perilous as that of Ananias ; their *hearts* and *thoughts* are open to *their Judge* ; and unless by His mercy some great and awful dispensation of His grace and providence shall open their eyes to their danger, they will *persist* till, before the judgment seat of God, they sink under the appalling remembrance of their folly and wickedness ; and, in answer to their plea of having taken upon themselves the vows, and embraced the hopes of Baptism, they shall be told that they have *lied*, and *lied not unto men, but unto God*.

Consider then, my brethren, I intreat you, consider well the nature of what you are going to do, in Confirmation. Bear with you to this momentous ordinance a profound and solemn sense of the holy profession you are going to embrace,—of the great duties you are to undertake,—and of the *hallowed* and *all-seeing God*, in *whose presence* you are to declare your consent to the promises made for you in your Baptism.

Awed alike by the great *importance* of your engagements, and by the sense of your unworthiness and weakness, lift up your heart and your voice to the throne of grace, in the name and through the merits of that Redeemer who is mighty to save. Let your thoughts be *intent* upon the *great work of salvation*, to which you are pledging your earnest and continual labours. Consider the assistance you require both to *will* and to *do*, and the *condition* on which that assistance is promised. It is to be **ASKED** in faith and sincerity. May then your petitions *thus* ascend before God. May your whole heart, and soul, and mind, accompany the Bishop in fervent and effectual prayer, that the Lord will “*strengthen you with the Holy Ghost, the Comforter*, and daily increase in you His *manifold* gifts;—the spirit of wisdom and understanding,—the spirit of counsel and ghostly strength,—the spirit of knowledge and true godliness; and fill you with the spirit of his holy fear, now and for ever.”

SERMON XXXII.

ADMONITION TO THOSE CONFIRMED.

THE PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY and everlasting God, who hast given unto us thy unworthy servants grace by the confession of a true faith to acknowledge the glory of the eternal Trinity, and in the power of the Divine Majesty to worship the Unity; We beseech thee, that thou wouldest keep us steadfast in this faith, and evermore defend us from all adversities, who livest and reignest, one God, world without end. Amen.

2 CHRON. xxix. 11.

MY SONS, BE NOT NOW NEGLIGENT; FOR THE LORD HATH CHOSEN
YOU TO STAND BEFORE HIM, TO SERVE HIM.

WHEN Hezekiah addressed this exhortation to the Levites, they had come forward to resume their office on the restoration of the service of the Temple, and its purification from the profanation and defilement to which it had been for a period subjected. He reminds them of the perilous state in which they were placed by the sinfulness of their nation, and tells them the course he had adopted,

to avert from himself and his subjects the just wrath of God. "Now it is in mine heart to make a *covenant with the Lord God of Israel*, that his fierce anger may turn away from us¹."

The Levites were parties, distinguished and much honoured parties, with him in this covenant. By every tie of duty and interest, by their sense of the honour conferred on them, and by their love of the merciful Lord, who had permitted them to serve Him, he urges them to acquit themselves worthily of their high calling, and not to neglect the avenue to mercy which had been opened to them. "My sons be not *now* negligent, for the Lord hath chosen you to stand before Him, to serve Him."

Though this exhortation immediately applied to the discharge of the peculiar duties of the Levites, under that covenant; it surely, in principle, must ever apply to the duties of all who enter into covenant with God. With peculiar propriety may it be addressed to those, who, in *confirmation*, have been enrolled with special solemnity under the banner of their Redeemer, and have devoted themselves before the congregation to serve the Lord. They, as the Levites, renew a covenant with the Lord God of Israel. They know that, according to the word of God, there is a temple, not made indeed with hands, but the temple of their body—that temple in which, the Holy Ghost declares, He will dwell, if it be

¹ Ver. 10.

kept undefiled. They are conscious of the defilement and profanation of that temple, both by the fall of their race and by their own actual sins ; and like the Levites to whom Hezekiah addressed his exhortation, they seek to restore it, and to avert the "fierce wrath" deserved by those who profaned it. They turn to the blood by which it is to be cleansed, they seek to renew "the covenant," and offer themselves to the service of Him, whose "wrath" they would deprecate, and whose mercies and bounties they would share. They claim a post of duty, as well as of honour, of trial, as well as of safety. Every circumstance of their situation addresses itself to their noblest feelings, as well as to their dearest hopes. To the heart and conscience of every Christian, the recollection of what he has vowed, and what his Lord has promised and done for him, appeals in the self same exhortation as that of Hezekiah to the Levites : "My sons, be not *now* negligent, for the Lord hath chosen you to stand before Him, to serve Him."

Follow up then, my brethren, the suggestions which this view of your situation presents. Do not pass over this important event, as you would an ordinary occurrence, without meditating upon the great influence it may have upon your present welfare, and your eternal destination. Reflect upon it, not only immediately after the Bishop's hands have been withdrawn, but frequently, in after life ; recal to your mind the honour and advantage conferred upon

you by your admission to Confirmation, and the solemnity of the engagements into which you then entered. Remember the motives and encouragements it sets before you, to be faithful soldiers and servants of Christ Jesus. And, remembering those motives and encouragements, consider often what steps and precautions you should take, that your conduct and sentiments may correspond with your duty.

Upon both these heads I will offer a few observations, intreating all those here addressed, whether confirmed recently, or long ago, to give them their attention, and to pursue the train of thought, into those various particulars to which the different dispositions and circumstances of mankind will give rise, and which must be the subject of each individual's self examination and private meditations.

Hezekiah appeals to the Levites on the ground that the Lord had "*chosen*" them "to stand before him, to serve him;" therefore he says, "Be not *now* negligent." Consider how great the honour, how distinguished the privilege, how responsible the state to which you have been chosen—Be not *now* negligent. Let the most fervent love and gratitude, to that good and gracious Master who hath honoured you by His choice, animate your exertions. Let a noble pride, and a sense of this high and holy calling, to which you have been admitted, set you above every temptation to disgrace yourselves, and forfeit the dignity with which you are in-

vested. "My sons be not *now* negligent; for the Lord hath chosen you to stand before Him, to serve Him."

And can we fail to perceive at a glance how forcibly these words and motives apply to those who have been confirmed, as well as to the Levites? May I not say to every such person, "Be not *now* negligent, for the LORD hath *chosen* you, to stand before Him, to serve Him?" Have you not been indeed *chosen* by Him? Have you not been born of Christian parents? Have you not from your infancy been sealed with the baptismal seal of the Christian Covenant? Have you not been brought up in a land where "the true light shineth?" Have you not had free access to the word of God, to the ministrations of His priests, to the service of His House, to the prayers and praises of His Church? To these, and many other Christian privileges, God has brought you without your aid, and by events and providential arrangements altogether beyond your control, or knowledge. He has indeed *chosen* you. With heartfelt gratitude should you embrace, and hold fast, the blessed hopes of the calling, and endeavour to lead "the rest of your lives according to this beginning¹." With what holy emulation should the recollection of this *choice* fill you! How should it raise your thoughts above those lusts which would disgrace you in the eyes of Him who chose you, and

¹ See Baptismal Service.

in whose service you have been enrolled, "to have victory and to triumph against the world, the flesh, and the devil." For these great and glorious purposes you were chosen; for these you have been called, like youthful knights, to take the service of heavenly chivalry; for these has the sword of the Spirit been put into your hands; for these you are clad in the whole armour of God. To you have been given, by the Captain of your salvation, spiritual weapons, and invincible strength. To you, when armed and chosen for His service, may apply, in a lower sense, the words prophetically spoken of Him who is your leader to victory against the powers of darkness, and the corruption of the world, "Gird thy sword upon *thy* thigh, O *most* mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty. And in thy majesty ride prosperously because of truth and meekness, *and* righteousness; and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things ¹.

Trample upon the base enemies of God's glory, and man's salvation. To this victory you were chosen, for this you were armed in heavenly armour. How fallen, how despised, how shamefully lost would you be, if, when *chosen* to triumph, you should negligently become the slaves of these unworthy masters, and perish by your own folly and baseness. These surely are motives of powerful influence; to our best feelings, to our highest interests they appeal; Be not *now* negligent, *the Lord hath chosen you*—the

¹ Ps. xlv. 3, 4.

great, the Almighty, the merciful, the perfect God, the God of glory and salvation, the Lord our Righteousness, the Redeemer, the Sanctifier ! Is this nothing ? “ Be not *now* negligent.”

But Confirmation has added even another motive to these. The Lord had *chosen* you to serve Him ; but in Confirmation *you* have *yourself chosen* to serve Him, to stand before Him ! In His temple, before Him, before His highest minister, before His assembled congregation, you have chosen solemnly to enrol yourself into His service ; you have made open and public profession of your determination, to take upon yourselves all the obligations of that service, to which He had chosen you in your Baptism. As the youthful Annibal, at the call of his father, presented himself in the temple of his Gods, to swear, before their altar, and in the face of his countrymen, undying hostility to Rome, and no peace or compromise, till he should have vanquished and overthrown it ; so you, at the call of your parents and sponsors, have presented yourselves in the temple of the *Living God*, to vow, before His altar, and in the face of your fellow Christians your undying hostility to sin ; and no peace or compromise, till you shall have *had victory and triumphed “ over the world, the flesh, and the Devil.”*

Is there no call to diligence in this recollection ? Is there nothing that appeals to your reason and conscience, in terms, which can be neither misunderstood nor evaded ? Does not this act, from that

moment to the last day of your life, set before you the exhortation, "Be not *now* negligent?" What have you undertaken, and before whom? Will the pure and Almighty God be mocked with an hypocritical and unmeaning profession? Can you profess to stand before Him, to serve Him, when you take no care, and deny yourself no gratification to do His will? What can any reasonable being expect to result from such an empty profession? Christ has told us that the entrance to His kingdom is not to be gained by mere profession. It is not the saying "Lord, Lord," that He requires, but the doing the will of His Father. Professions broken only add treachery and falsehood to disobedience. Scorn and derision, as well as punishment, would be the just reward of those whose desertion and failure are made more glaring by the solemnity of their professions of service and fidelity; who, after voluntarily coming forward under the banners of the Redeemer, and in the ranks of the faithful, like the children of Ephraim disgrace their cause, and turn their backs in the day of battle.

It would, indeed, be a strange argument to use, that we entered into engagements with our lips, and did nothing but show in our lives our disregard and contempt of them; that we made a covenant, and that we claim its privileges, on the ground of a continual breach of its obligations. The great Judge of all will not thus be set at nought. You have

entered into a solemn and most important engagement. See that you observe it; never lose sight of it; be always on your guard, always active in fulfilling what is required of those baptized, and what they are pledged, first by their godfathers, and then at Confirmation in their own persons, to *believe*, to *renounce*, and to *do*. “My sons be not *now* negligent, for the Lord hath chosen you,” and you yourselves have chosen to stand before Him, to serve Him.

Neither let the word *serve* discourage you, or make you forget the *nature* of the service, to which you are chosen, and which you have embraced. His service is not bondage, but “perfect freedom.” It is not only your bounden duty and your interest, as you hope to share the reward of the good and faithful servant in His heavenly household; it is your happiness here on earth. The “hand of the diligent,” says Solomon, “maketh rich.” And such is the case more especially with respect to spiritual diligence. Every labour of love sows the seeds of peace and happiness even here. Be not negligent in the service to which you have pledged yourselves. The harvest is sure and precious. Every labour gives you fresh power, and increased encouragement. Faith becomes more lively by exercise, hope more fervent; serenity of mind, confidence, meekness, love of God and man, all the handmaidens of religion, will gather round your path, and strew it with

the flowers of peace and joy. The youngest of those to whom these exhortations may be addressed, have after well-doing partially tasted the pure pleasure of their approving hearts, and the commendations of those they love and honour. Few are the delights which this world can offer superior to those arising from such feelings; but what are these compared with the communings of God's Holy Spirit with the conscience of the believer, when, looking to Jesus as the Author and Finisher of our faith, he dwells upon the precious promises of God, and upon the gracious Master, who condescended to speak of frail and erring man as faithful though weak, as admissible though unworthy. In prosperity or adversity, in health or in sickness, in life or in death, he will possess an encouragement and consolation, which the world can neither give, nor take away; the "*well done good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord,*" will ever be before him, and will forbid him to be *now* negligent, for the Lord hath *chosen* him to stand before Him, to serve Him. I shall conclude with a few suggestions, to make your conduct and sentiments correspond with your duty and professions.

I. The first and most obvious duty of one who has in confirmation chosen to serve the Lord, is the frequent, reverent, and practical study of the Holy Scriptures. By practical study, I mean such study as will not terminate in merely knowing your duty, but in applying the knowledge you acquire to

your practice. If you really mean to take upon yourselves the vows made by your godfathers and godmothers in your Baptism, and to embrace the hopes therein held out to you, where can you learn the particulars of those things, which were vowed, and of those hopes which you embrace, but in the word of God? That word contains what they promised in your name, and what you take upon yourselves in Confirmation. To despise this word would be an act as absurd and inconsistent as to embark on a voyage, and cast overboard the chart which was to guide you to the haven.

II. I would particularly urge on those who have been confirmed, the careful observance of the Sabbath, and constant attendance at public worship of Almighty God. If God hath chosen you to serve Him, and you have confirmed and ratified the engagements which were entered into in your name, how glaringly inconsistent with such a profession must be the act of dishonouring His ordinance! Surely a proper sense of the service you have chosen will bring you gladly with the congregation, to honour His holy name, to praise Him, to seek His aid and support. If you forsake Him, you must expect, indeed you know from His word, that He will forsake you. And if He shall forsake you, you must fall, disgrace the service you have chosen, and forfeit the hope of the Covenants to which you were admitted.

III. Every one who has a due sense of the so-

lemnity and importance of the engagement, will be always on his guard against the temptations which may lead him to a breach of it. These it is not possible here to enumerate. But I will especially mention one, and that is *bad company*. A man who, having chosen the service of God, needlessly seeks the society of the wicked, is as inconsistent as he, who, expressing his horror of the plague, should take up his abode in a pest hospital, and seat himself among the most dangerously infected of its inmates.

IV. Frequently at the Lord's Supper seek communion with Him, who hath chosen you to serve Him, and receive fresh supplies of spiritual nourishment and power to strengthen you to serve Him well. You know that He who chose you to serve Him, ordained this Holy Sacrament in remembrance of His death and passion, the foundation of all your hopes. Do not exhibit yourselves in the perverse and inconsistent position of professing yourselves His servants, and yet despising His most solemn and affecting command, and treating with neglect the invitation of His messengers to this festival of love. The examination of yourselves in preparing for it, will lead you to review the promises made in your name, and to consider how you have acted up to your profession, as represented in Baptism; "which is, to follow the example of our Saviour Christ, and to be made like unto Him; that as He died, and rose again for us, so should we, who are baptized, die from sin, and live again unto

righteousness; continually mortifying all our evil and corrupt affections, and daily proceeding in all virtue and godliness of living”.

V. Lastly; in this case, as in all others wherein you desire to have the support necessary to enable you faithfully to serve the God who has chosen you, and whom you have chosen, be diligent in prayer. In that be not now negligent. Often and earnestly in the morning, and evening, and noon day, let God hear your voice. I shall not here dwell upon the necessity and blessings of prayer. You cannot do what you promise without it; with it you can do all things. Let me conclude with a form of words, calculated to give fervent utterance to your wants and desires, suitable to our subject, and taken from the office of Confirmation.

“O Almighty Lord, and everlasting God, vouchsafe, we beseech thee, to direct, sanctify, and govern both our hearts and bodies in the ways of thy laws and in the works of thy commandments: that through thy mighty protection, both here and ever, we may be preserved in body and soul, through our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.”

¹ Baptismal Service.

SERMON XXXIII.

THE ORIGIN AND NATURE OF THE MARRIAGE CONTRACT.

THE PRAYER.

O God, who by thy mighty power hast made all things out of nothing, who also (after other things set in order) didst appoint that out of Man (created after thine own Image or Similitude) Woman should take her beginning; and knitting them together, didst teach that it should never be lawful to put asunder those whom Thou by Matrimony hadst made one: we pray thee to send thy blessing upon all those, who enter upon this holy state, that they may surely perform and keep the vow and covenant betwixt them made, and ever remain in perfect love and peace together, and live according to thy laws, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

MATT. xix. 6.

WHAT THEREFORE GOD HATH JOINED TOGETHER, LET NOT MAN PUT ASUNDER.

WE now resume the consideration of *relative duties*, which the introduction of the Sermons on Confirmation had interrupted. Our subject is *Marriage*, at all times important, from its influence on public

morals and domestic peace, and from its intimate connexion with the happiness and the interests of all classes. But, in the present times, legislative changes and eager discussions have conspired to attract to it the attention of the religious and reflecting with more than ordinary solicitude. This solicitude impels us to enter upon the subject more at large, than perhaps under common circumstances might have been deemed necessary, or desirable, in a work of this popular description. Three separate discourses will be devoted to it. The present will treat generally of the *origin*, and *nature*, of the marriage contract—the next, of the *purposes*, for which our *Church* declares it to have been *designed*,—and the *manner*, in which she directs it to be *solemnized*—and the third, of the *duties of husbands and wives*.

The present Sermon, on the origin and the nature of the Marriage contract, will be appropriated to the discussion of the following questions:—

1. By *whom*, and with what *obligations*, Marriage was instituted.
2. The probable origin of the erroneous notion, that Marriage is a *civil* contract.
3. By whom, and how far, persons may, by Divorce, be absolved its obligations.

I. By whom, and with what obligations, was Marriage instituted ?

On this head we affirm, that the *state* of Marriage is of *Divine institution*, that its *obligations* are founded upon *God's ordinance*, and that *none*, but the Divine Lawgiver, can set aside, or limit them.

You will observe, brethren, that I say—the *state* of Marriage ; because the *state* of Marriage is one thing, and the *solemnization* of Marriage is another ; the former of *Divine* institution, the latter coming under the province *partly* of *ecclesiastical*, *partly* of *civil* regulation. It is with the former only that we have to deal in the present sermon ; the latter will be considered in the next.

Now, to determine the question of the *institution*, and *obligations* of Marriage, we may have recourse to the highest of all authority—the word of God. And there those points appear to be so plainly, and positively settled, that no room is left for dispute, unless for those, who *deny* the truth and inspiration of the Bible. In proof of this I shall commence by citing, and comparing two passages, one from the Old, and the other from the New, Testament.

In the second chapter of Genesis¹ we find the following simple and explicit account of the original institution, and obligations of Marriage. “ And the Lord *God* said, It is not good that the man should

¹ Ver. 18. 21—25.

be alone, I will make him an *help meet* for him. And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept; and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof: and the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and *brought* her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now *bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh*; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. *Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.*"

That no plea of Christian liberty, no vain imagination of the Gospel making us, in this respect, free from the precepts and institutions of the Law, may be set up against the above explicit account of the matter, compare it with the following declaration of *Jesus himself*.

"Have ye not read, that He, which made *them* at the beginning, made them male and female, and said, *For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh?* Wherefore they are no more twain but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder¹."

Here not only is a distinct acknowledgment of the Mosaic account of the origin, and obligations of Marriage, made by Jesus Himself, but the very words of that account quoted, adopted, and enforced,

¹ Matt. xix. 4, 5, 6.

by Him. And, that it may not be doubted, whether Adam spake by the *inspiration* and delivered the *decree* of God, Jesus tells us expressly that the words uttered by Adam, declaring the institution and obligations of Marriage, were *God's* words. "HE that *made them at the beginning*" (that is, God) "*made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife.*" It may also be observed, that Adam here must be considered not as speaking of his own marriage only, but delivering the *divine decree*, respecting the nature of the contract, to be recorded for the general benefit of mankind, because the words "*leave his father and mother*" could not apply to his *own* case, and must refer to the establishment of a rule for future generations.

Nothing can be clearer than the concurrent testimony of the Old and New Testament, in these two passages, to the *Divine* institution and obligations of Marriage. That, which Moses recorded before the Law, Jesus ratified in the Gospel. I have said, the *divine obligations* of Marriage; for God, at the beginning, declared the *obligations*, no less explicitly and solemnly, than the *institution* of Matrimony. And, in the one respect, as well as in the other, did Jesus adopt the original contract. In the Old Testament, Adam, speaking under *inspiration* (as we have shewn) the decrees of God, said, This is "now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh," and, "*therefore shall a man leave his father*

and his mother, and cleave unto his wife, and they shall be one flesh."

In the New Testament, Jesus said, "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh."

St. Paul also in the fifth chapter of his Epistle to the Ephesians ¹ more at large states the obligations of this Divine institution, expressly declaring them to belong to the original contract.

Now it is evident, from these passages, that the state of Marriage was in the beginning ordained by God—that, by *Divine authority*, and *not by human laws*, it bound the parties contracting, to cleave to each other, to love each other, to have the same interests, to leave even father and mother, if necessary for their mutual welfare and happiness, and finally to regard each other as "one flesh," as part of themselves—inseparable in interest, and home, so long as they should remain on earth. The contract, under which they enter into these bonds, is described as clearly, as words can describe it, and proved as clearly, as circumstances can prove it, to be a *religious* contract. The *manner* of God's instituting it, the fact, that married persons are "those whom God hath joined together," are stated in the most positive, and explicit terms. And, to mark more decidedly by the very circumstances of its institution, its peculiarly religious character, and its essen-

¹ Ver. 28—31.

tial independence of civil jurisdiction, Jesus gives us the *reason*, for which man may not dissolve the contract—that man did *not make* it; “what *God* hath *joined* together, let not *man* put asunder.” And St. Paul ¹ expressly declares, that these obligations into which married persons enter, are not to terminate till *death* shall part them.

If all these circumstances do not constitute it a *religious* contract, and utterly exclude the notion of its being a *civil* contract, what more can be wanting?

There is an account that God instituted it, and declared its obligations; there is a special caution, that man may not dissolve it; and there are *cases* (as we shall presently show) in which the *Divine law-giver* has pronounced its dissolution, with a warning that those, who should break it for *other* causes, will be guilty in His sight. How can this be regarded in any other light than as a *religious* contract? And what can have caused the erroneous idea, that it is a *civil*, and *not* a religious contract? This is our second question.

II. I think the enquiry into the causes of the erroneous notion of marriage being a civil contract may serve to direct the general reader, to some useful distinctions; may prevent him from being shaken by imperfect quotations from high au-

¹ Rom. vii. 23.

thorities ; and may serve to dissipate those sophistries, and those doubts, which obtain strength, from confounding circumstances accidentally connected with things, with the nature of things themselves.

The words of Blackstone have been often, either artfully, or ignorantly brought forward, to mislead the weak and unlearned with the notion, that he considered marriage as essentially a civil and not a religious contract. To show the deception practised, I will first quote his words as they are usually quoted by those who would persuade us, that this eminent Lawyer believed Marriage to be only a *civil* contract.

He says " Our *law* considers marriage in no other light than as a civil contract." Well, what then ! Supposing that by this were meant, that in the judgment of *those* who made, and those who administer, our laws, it was not a *religious* contract, could their judgment alter the *divine* law, which has declared it to be a religious, and not a civil, contract ? No, not unless man's authority were greater than God's. But Blackstone never meant any thing of the kind. What he meant is this, that human laws have no concern with marriage, but in *one light*, that is, as its consequences affect *civil* society : they consider it only *in part* ; their province is not to meddle with the divine nature of the contract—that belongs to *religion*. The law does not question the *religious* nature of the contract, or assume, that it is nothing more than a *civil* contract, but deals only

with those *consequences* and *accidental circumstances* of it, which affect the community as a temporal body. Our laws and judges may bind and unbind so far as *civil* obligations, and penalties extend; but the Divine obligations belong to the jurisdiction of another law, and another judge. And Blackstone not only meant this, but most distinctly declared it, as will appear by the words, which follow the above imperfect quotation of his sentiments. He says,—“the *holiness* of the matrimonial state is left entirely to the ecclesiastical law: the temporal courts *not having jurisdiction* to consider unlawful marriage as *sin*, but merely as a *civil* inconvenience.”

Marriage, though of Divine institution and obligation, must lead to relations, duties, and consequences, materially affecting the welfare, and peace of society. And so far as the state, the conservator of society, is interested in the observance of those relations and duties, and in the nature of those consequences, it has a right to interpose in the way of restraint, encouragement or punishment according to the exigencies of the case. But this right cannot make Marriage, which is a religious, a *civil* contract. The civil power may release parties from civil obligations, but cannot alter in the least degree the religious obligations of the compact. It is both the duty, and the interest, of the state to *encourage* reverence, and to *discourage* contempt, of the *religious* obligations of the nuptial contract; but

these obligations it did not create, and never can annul. Whatsoever man may decree or do, the ordinance of God remains unchanged, unchangeable. *God hath joined together, man cannot put asunder.* With respect to its origin, to its sanctity—to our souls—to our responsibility to God, it is, and ever must remain, a *religious* contract. And it is from overlooking, and perhaps sometimes wilfully confounding these distinctions, that the erroneous notion of marriage being a civil contract has been propagated. It may be said by some, that they use the phrase “civil contract” in no other sense than here explained. But this, I am confident, is not the sense in which the generality of people understand it, nor in which many wish them to understand it. They understand by it a contract to be entered into before a civil officer, and with no other sanctions or penalties, than those of a common bargain or hiring.

But then, it may be asked, if it be of essentially a religious character, and not to be annulled or changed by human authority, how is it that human tribunals pronounce sentences of divorce? This question we will solve under our third head; namely:—

III. By whom, and to what extent, may persons, by divorce, be absolved from the obligations of the marriage contract?

This would be a large field, if we were to enter

into a *legal* view of the question of divorce, or even into the controversies respecting the cases in which Scripture permits it. I will not attempt so much ; but rather lay down a few general rules and distinctions, which may serve as landmarks, and prevent that confusion which creates difficulty where, in reality, there is none.

First, then, bear in mind the negative principle already established in this discourse. No HUMAN authority can divorce, unless in cases which GOD either expressly, or by fair inference from HIS WORD, has permitted a divorce to be pronounced. If God has not sanctioned the sentence, the *sin* of breaking *His* compact will remain the same, whatever man may decide. If, therefore, any human tribunal undertook to absolve a man from the guilt of breaking God's law, it would be exceeding its province, and the danger of God's wrath would remain undiminished.

But secondly, may a man determine, from an examination of *God's law*, whether his case is one in which he is at liberty to dissolve the contract ?

This question will admit of a different answer, accordingly as it may relate to two different objects—whether his determination is to be a mere matter of *opinion* for the satisfaction of his *conscience* ; or to be the rule of his *conduct* in matters which may *affect others*.

In both these cases great deference is due to lawful authority. If doubtful questions arise, God

has commissioned the rulers of His Church to expound His word, especially in matters concerning the whole body, or the conduct of its members *as towards another*. The courts of law declare the will of the state, as the decisions of the Church declare the will of God: With regard then even to the *satisfaction of his conscience*, in matters of either civil, or ecclesiastical¹ jurisdiction, as a man may not lightly despise the decisions of the lawful tribunals or ministers, so he ought to be well assured that their decisions are against God's word, before he concludes them to be mistaken rather than himself.

But with regard to his own conduct in matters *affecting others*, he will *sin* against God, as well as the community, if he shall proceed to *act* upon his *private opinion*, without the sentence of a lawful tribunal, unless that tribunal shall require compliances *clearly* and *expressly contrary* to the *word of God*. And, even in *that* case, though he may not sin against God, he must patiently suffer that which the state inflicts on those who disobey its laws.

¹ I wish it to be observed that when I speak of *ecclesiastical* jurisdiction with respect to cases of *conscience*, I do not allude to the decisions of what is called the "Ecclesiastical Court" but to the *formularies* and *Ministers* of the Church. The Ecclesiastical Court is conducted, by *lay* officers, and its decisions, though partly founded on Canon law, are also guided by a heathen code. It is not intended for the guidance of conscience any more than the civil courts, in common with which it claims that deference, I have stated.

For, when our actions may affect the community (as in the case of divorce) it is not sufficient to have come to a right conclusion in our own mind, but we must have authority from a competent tribunal to act upon that conclusion. Without such a principle what terrible evils would overwhelm any society, civil or religious. If every man were not only to satisfy his conscience, but to shape his conduct to others, by being judge in his own case, what a scene of confusion and injustice society would present! How few would be *qualified* to judge? How few would be found giving judgment *against themselves*; or *doing justice* to those, against whom their passions had prejudiced them? If every man were to determine in his own case the legitimate grounds of divorce, endless confusion and misery would be the result. It is clear, therefore, that a sentence of divorce, to whatever extent it releases parties from the contract, or from the guilt and penalties of dissolving it, must be pronounced by lawful authority.

The next consideration, then, is—to *what extent* such a sentence does release us.

To this I answer, that a sentence of divorce pronounced by any *human* authority, whether ecclesiastical or civil, is, so *far* as respects the original and *divine* obligations of Marriage, merely *declaratory*. In the case of the Church, it declares that *according to the judgment* of the Church to which we

belong, the parties are lawfully divorced. It also absolves us from the censures of that Church, and secures us from the sin of *acting upon private judgment*, against the lawful rulers of the Church.

In the case of the state, it declares the lawfulness of the divorce in the judgment of the state. It also absolves from the penalties imposed by the state on those who violate the duties, which she requires in those married, and also prevents us from incurring the guilt of *acting upon private judgment* in matters in which God has ordered obedience to "the powers that be."

But neither these declarations nor exemptions can annul or alter the Divine obligations, unless in cases in which these declarations and exemptions are *conformable* to the declarations and exemptions of *God's* word. The decree, that what *God* hath joined together *man* cannot put asunder, is unalterable. If human lawgivers and judges divorce, when God has not—then, though they may absolve in the points above stated, yet they cannot alter the *sin* of breaking *God's* contract. For that we must take our trial before another tribunal, at which judges and legislators, as well as those affected by their decisions, will all have to answer for "the things done in the body, whether they be good or bad."

God has in the *New Testament* declared only one legitimate ground of divorce, and in very strong

terms stated, that parties divorced for any other cause, and *marrying again*, are guilty of the *sin of adultery*¹.

But are we to infer from this that, in *all* other cases wherein our courts pronounce a sentence of divorce, the parties marrying again would be guilty of adultery? No: because in some cases a sentence of divorce is *not* a *dissolution* of the marriage contract, but merely the judgment of a lawful tribunal, that the contract was *never lawfully entered into*. Parties so coming together are, (to use the words of the Church in the Marriage service) "*not joined together by God*, neither is their matrimony lawful." The man does not "*put away his wife*," but the Court decides, that she *never was his wife*. It will not be consistent with our purpose to enumerate such cases, nor can I here enter upon a consideration of the extension of the privilege of the state, to permit cases of *separation*, which may be inferred from Moses having, as a legislator, been allowed to establish laws, justified by the necessity of the case rather than the religious duties of the parties, for the "*hardness of their hearts*." In all these cases there must be *sin* in the sight of God—at least in one of the parties; and such separations, though requisite for the peace of society, and perhaps equitably allowable for the comfort of the innocent party, will not justify *either* in a *second marriage*

¹ Matt. v. 31, 32. Matt. xix. 9.

during the life of the other, according to the tenor of *Christ's rule*¹. That rule is our guide, so far as *sin* is concerned. The contract must be regarded as a *religious* contract. Its origin, its obligations, are of *God*, and our care must be to observe it to *God*, rather than man.

¹ See also St. Paul's confirmation of this application of the rule, 1 Cor. vii. 10, 11.

SERMON XXXIV.

ON THE PURPOSES, AND SOLEMNIZATION OF MARRIAGE.

THE PRAYER.

O God, who by thy mighty power hast made all things out of nothing, who also (after other things set in order) didst appoint that out of Man (created after thine own Image and Similitude) Woman should take her beginning; and knitting them together, didst teach that it should never be lawful to put asunder those whom Thou by Matrimony hadst made one: we pray Thee to send thy blessing upon all those, who enter upon this holy state, that they may surely perform and keep the vow and covenant betwixt them made, and ever remain in perfect love and peace together, and live according to thy laws, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

MATT. xix. 6.

WHAT THEREFORE GOD HATH JOINED TOGETHER, LET NOT MAN
ASUNDER.

WE proposed in this Sermon to consider the purposes for which our Church declares the state of Marriage to have been designed, and the manner in which she directs Matrimony to be solemnized.

These subjects are thus connected with each other, and with that of the preceding Sermon; that the institution of Marriage by God, and his making it a religious contract, requires that the contract should be reverently entered into, with a due sense and acknowledgment of its awful sanctions, and with such solemnities as may distinguish it from ordinary contracts, and mark its divine origin; that the purposes for which we shall see that it was ordained by Him, render it the interest of the community, of families, and of individuals, to cherish a reverence, and sense of its sacred character; and that the combined weight of these considerations establish on the strongest basis the wisdom and piety with which our Church requires the solemnization of this important and holy compact to be performed in the house, under the sanction, and by the Ministers, of Almighty God.

The mere fact stated in the text, that the married state takes its rise from God's ordinance, stamps it as essential to the welfare and happiness of mankind; and in what respects it operates upon these I cannot take a better order of describing, than that which our own venerable Church has adopted in the introductory address to those, who come within her holy precincts to solemnize this important contract in the house of her Lord, and to implore, through the ministration of his priest, his blessing upon their hearts, and upon their endeavours to discharge the great duties they are about to undertake.

I. The first purpose of God in this ordinance, which the Church points out as having a relation to the welfare of society, is that a race of children should take their station amongst his intelligent creatures, for whom, by the very *circumstances* of the covenant under which they were born, a pledge should be given for their being "brought up in the fear and nurture of the Lord, and to the praise of His holy name;" and for whom, moreover, by the self-same circumstances, should be provided the best security, consistent with the exercise of human free-will and responsibility, for that pledge being carried into effect.

I need not, after the many observations to the same effect in my previous Sermons¹, now dwell upon the advantages which must result to society, as well as to the individuals themselves, from the prevalence of religion amongst its members. Neither will it be necessary here to urge the fearful evils which must arise to any society from an irreligious population. Now, what can better tend to secure the general promotion of religion, with its attendant graces and virtues, than an ordinance which, by the most solemn sanctions, and the most endearing ties, ratifies the claims of children to the care of *both* their parents. The value of such an institution cannot be placed before us in a more striking point of view, than by contrasting the

¹ See especially Sermon XX.

situation of the offspring of marriage, with that of the miserable, and often outcast, children born out of the pale of wedlock. These, commonly destitute of a *father's* care and authority, and sometimes of even *both* the parents, who are either regardless or ashamed of the child of their disgrace, are sent forth, unarmed and unprotected, amidst the snares and temptations of the world. Too often do the streets of our metropolis find the ranks of crime largely recruited from those unhappy beings in whom no father's authority has interposed to arrest the early advances of wickedness, and over whom no mother's care has watched to sow in their infant minds those principles and seeds of holiness, which might preoccupy the ground, and spring up to maintain possession of it, against the deadly and rank harvest sown by the enemy of their souls. Nay what is worse, the guilty parents instead of guarding and directing the feeble steps of the illegitimate child, are too well prepared themselves to set the example, and become his leaders, in the course of that guilt in which his very being originated. How different from this are the virtuous associations, the hallowed and gentle bonds, which have their origin "in the holy estate of matrimony." Here no feelings of shame and disgrace interfere to cause them, in violation of the gracious claims of natural affection, to shun their offspring. He is not only the object to which their heart naturally yearns, he is the pledge of *holy* love, the joy and

pride of hearts bound together by ties which the *Church* sanctions, and in a contract which God has recorded and ratified in heaven. Instead of being a disgrace, he is regarded as a *gift*¹ of God, and prized as a token of Divine *favour*; he is cherished and watched over with all the *anxiety* of unrestrained *natural* affection, and with all the *scrupulousness* arising from a *religious* sense of the obligations of the parental office, and from a consciousness of the solemnity of that engagement, into which the father and mother entered at the *altar*, and in the *presence* of *Almighty God*. Few will be found so depraved as altogether to treat with contempt these awful claims, and still fewer to run counter to the feelings of natural affection; when, instead of being stifled by the danger of infamy or punishment, those feelings are cherished and encouraged by the *approbation* of God and man. But this care will not be confined merely to their spiritual instruction; it will extend itself also to a care for their bodily comfort, and to their capability of fulfilling *honourably* and *beneficially* their duties in that station of *society*, which the providence of God shall be pleased to assign to them. Hence the *community* derives most of those advantages, which may accrue to it from a race of citizens, whose bodily vigour, and mental endowments, fit them to perform *well* its offices. Neither, on the other hand,

¹ Ps. cxxvii. 4—6.

must it be forgotten, that, while the institution of marriage prevents the state from being burdened with the maintenance of those, whose helplessness profligate or self-condemned parents might abandon, a similar security is provided, by the self-same institution, against the destitute parent being left by his offspring in the feebleness of old age, either to perish, or to be a burden to the community. The affection and honour established between the offspring of matrimony and their parents is likely to be reciprocal; and those sacred relations, which bind the parent to feel an interest and obligation for the maintenance of the child, also bind the child, when he shall have become of age and ability, to honour and support the parent, from whom he derived his existence, and to whose affectionate cares he is indebted for his preservation.

To these advantages which society reaps from this ordinance, must be added the immense benefits which arise from the spur applied to human *industry* and *enterprise*, by the *necessities* and *relations*, to which matrimony gives birth. The extent of these is incalculable. From the affectionate desire to promote the welfare of their families, or from a conscientious earnestness to fulfil the obligations to which parents have rendered themselves liable, have arisen, in no small degree, the multiplied inventions of scientific research, and the immense and accumulated achievements of the excited energies of the human mind. While, on the other hand, the com-

bination of efforts, and the *aids* of mutual support, brought about by the natural associations of husbands, and wives, parents and children, brothers and sisters, have given tenfold strength to individual exertion. Who can reflect a moment on these, and not see the gigantic scale, on which these associations must operate on the comfort and welfare of every community, wherein they prevail, and are respected. The *state*, as well as individuals, may apply to children the exclamation of the Psalmist—they are “like as the arrows in the hand of the giant.”

II. The second reason, for which, according to our Church, God ordained marriage, relates to the holiness and usefulness of *those*, who *enter* into that state; and thus presents it in another light, in which its influence upon the welfare and happiness of society, and of the individuals themselves, may be clearly seen. She represents it as a *remedy against sin*, and a *preservative against impurity and licentiousness*. Regarded in this point of view, it may be considered as an institution which, more than any other, tends to maintain the dignity of civilized society, and to exhibit man in his superiority above the brute creation. This is a subject on which it will not be necessary to dwell. I shall only observe, that were this institution to fall into contempt, the chief grace and beauty of the *female* character must be entirely obliterated; while *man* would sink from his eminence, as a civilized and intellectual being, and rank only with the

savage, and with the slave of mere sensual appetite.

It is perhaps difficult, if not impossible, to conceive, and yet more to describe, the revolting scenes of licentiousness and crime, which would exhibit human nature in its greatest degradation under such circumstances. While, on the other hand, it requires no extraordinary observation or sagacity, to perceive the virtues and pure affections which flourish where the vows of marriage are sacredly fulfilled.

III. The third reason for which our Church tells us that God ordained the holy estate of matrimony is, "for the mutual society, help, and comfort that the one ought to have of the other, both in prosperity and adversity." In describing the advantages under this head, I shall avail myself of the language of one to whose work, upon this subject, I am indebted for many useful suggestions ¹.

"At the first foundation of marriage, adversity was not known to man: and yet, even at that time, was it not good for him to be alone. If then, Adam, amidst the joys of Paradise, had need of an help meet for him, how infinitely greater must that necessity have become, now that the ground is cursed for his sake; now that all his posterity are doomed to eat bread in the sweat of the face; now that human life is chequered with so many shadows

¹ Dr. Cresswell's Relative Duties.

of weariness, of care, and of sorrow ! Now, we are born to trouble, by a law which altereth not, a law as certain as that according to which the spark takes an upward direction. Toil, under some form or other, is our common lot ; so, if in any instance there be an immunity from toil, it is more than overbalanced by a listlessness still more intolerable. Every day 'man goeth forth to his work, and to his labour until the evening,' and returns to his hearth exhausted and dispirited. Even if it be mere bodily labour, in which he is occupied, he requires more than rest to enable him, with alacrity, to renew the morrow's task, and to support a life of tedious uniformity. But if his mental powers have, during the day, been kept in a state of continual tension and strong exercise, by professional avocations, he has still greater need of relaxation. And, in either case, nothing can so speedily and completely dissipate the sense of weariness and depression, as the pure sunshine of a married home, the cordial welcome of conjugal affection, the endearing blandishments of beloved children, conversation sweetened by a confidence, which has no parallel, the interchange and renewal of fondness, gladdening recollections, and aspiring hopes.

"But, further, in addition to the toil which is laid upon him, man is condemned to encounter in his progress through life, disappointment, opposition, envy and enmity, pecuniary losses, and the sudden, or insidious attacks of disease. And, to review this

gloomy catalogue of multifarious evils, not only incidental to humanity, but inseparable from it, is to sound the encomium of the marriage state. Whether it be that we retire worsted from the lists of honourable competition, whether we are thwarted and injured by the machinations of those, who hate us ; or are tossed by the storm of unforeseen misfortune, in what port can we so well seek for refuge and succour as in the bosom of our families ? What hand can smooth the bed of sickness, what eye can watch and alleviate its torments with so much skill, and patience, and tenderness, as those of an affectionate consort ?

“The separate provinces of the two sexes, in the business of human life, are as distinctly marked, I think, as the lines of division on a geographical map ; and they are so well known, that it would be a waste of words minutely to describe them. Suffice it to say, that our comforts flow, principally, from the domestic assiduities, and the constant attention to matters of minute detail, foreign to a man’s genius and habits, although essential to his happiness, which he owes to the weaker sex. Though, to a certain limited extent, these assiduities and attentions may, in some sort, be supplied by servile and mercenary hands ; yet they are incomparably the most active and efficacious, when they are the result of that perfect union of hearts and interests which is established by the marriage vow.

“They, who have the good fortune to be so united are in possession, as it were, of a double self: so that sometimes the soul can quit, for awhile, the bosom which most suffers, to refresh itself in the serenity of the other.” — — — — —

“Nor can I quit this division of my subject, without suggesting, that if there be any force of truth in the observations, which I have made under it, either in the way of commendation or of caution, all that has been therein asserted, applies most strongly to the poor. Into the lot of the poor man there enters, undoubtedly, a greater than the average proportion of severe toil and privation; and the range of his innocent recreations is more narrowly circumscribed. Having no resources in literature, or in the cultivation of the liberal arts, he is more exposed to the temptations of gross vice. It is, therefore, of the greatest importance to him, to enter into that state, which promises the most of help and of solace, and which is the best safeguard of his virtue: supposing always, that he has a fair prospect of being enabled, by diligent endeavours, to maintain a family. For if he be thus assisted, and guarded, in his laborious career, if his low roof be cheered by the rays of conjugal fidelity and fondness, he may say to fortune, “Withhold thy doubtful and perilous favours,—‘for better is a dinner of herbs, where love is, than a stalled ox.’ The rich man is waited upon by his inferiors—I by mine equal: to him are rendered bought services—

to me unbought : he is obeyed with secret murmurings and reluctance, whilst my wants and wishes are anticipated and prevented by a loving and beloved companion."

II. We will now proceed to consider the manner in which *marriage* should be *solemnized*, especially that form, which the Church of England has thought fit to appoint. What we shall have to observe on this subject, though brief, shall be made as comprehensive as our limits will permit, and be offered in the following order.

1. An outline of the form of solemnizing marriage according to the Liturgy of the Church of England.

2. The reasons of the solemnization of marriage being made a *religious* ceremony.

3. General remarks and inferences from the views taken of these points.

The parties and their friends having come together into the house of God, the minister of God proceeds in the name, and under the *commission* of his Lord, to join the parties in marriage, according to the form established by the Church.

I. The form of solemnization of matrimony commences with an exhortation, calculated to impress upon the minds of the parties just views of the

engagement, into which they are to enter. It sets forth the *Divine institution* of marriage, the purposes for which God ordained it, the hallowing of the solemnization of it by the presence of Jesus, and the performance of His first miracle, at the marriage feast at Cana in Galilee—the honour and reverence claimed for it by St. Paul, in comparing it to the union betwixt Christ and His Church. Its solemnity is further indicated by the congregation first, and afterwards the parties intending marriage, being called upon, as they will answer at the great judgment day, before God, whose ordinance these latter are taking upon themselves, and to whom the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed, to declare any impediment, of which they may have knowledge, and which God's word hath laid down, as a bar to their lawfully entering upon the state of matrimony. The parties then proceed to pledge themselves to the performance of its duties, in words, which impressively remind them, *whose* ordinance marriage is. This being done, the minister of God blesses them in the name of his Master, and in prayer calls upon God to witness and prosper their union, and give them the will and the power to perform faithfully "the vow and covenant betwixt them made." Then, joining their hands, he binds them with the bond, which *God* having made, *man* cannot put asunder. The contract is complete; and the priest of God solemnly declares it ratified, "*in the name of the*

Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Appropriate Psalms, and further prayers are added, in which the minister, the parties, and their friends, join their supplications for the blessing of God, and for His Spirit to enable them faithfully to fulfil the duties of the married state. Lastly, for their instruction, those duties are collected from Scripture, and set before them chiefly in its very words. A more complete, impressive, edifying, and solemn form will not easily be devised.

II. The reasons for which the solemnization of marriage should be made a religious ceremony, are many, but, as our space will not allow us to treat of them fully, we will merely state some of the principal ones, in a series of short propositions.

Marriage is of purely *Divine* institution, therefore its solemnization should be *religious*.

God's ministers are the proper officers to join in His name those whom He joins; and His Church the fit place, for the solemnities of a contract, of which the origin and sanctions are of His appointment, and no power but His can dissolve the obligations.

It is *not* a *new* practice, but woven in with our national and ecclesiastical history, rooted in the affections and veneration of the people—the bond, by which our forefathers entered into the covenant of marriage, under which the sanctity of the nuptial tie has been honoured, and we have been born the offspring of lawful wedlock. Independently, there-

fore, of its own excellence, a good and religious man will consider the *evils*, which may arise from *unsettling* the public mind on a point wherein it is of the highest importance, that its convictions should be well established, and wherein *practical proof* has been given of the efficacy of the ancient, and long venerated form.

Whether we regard the *Divine institution*, and *obligations* of matrimony, or the *purposes* for which it was ordained, and its influence upon social and domestic purity and happiness, it is the interest of both the individuals to be married, and of the community in general, that the former should be *deeply impressed* with the *awful sanctions* of the marriage contract, and of the guilt and punishment, which will result from its violation.

These same interests of both individuals and the state, also render it of the highest importance that the *blessing of God*, be sought by the parties, through the ministrations of God's ambassadors, and the prayers of the congregation, to secure the faithful performance of the duties undertaken.

The question is not, whether in the *sight of God* the marriage compact entered into by other forms is binding upon the parties (which it undoubtedly is); but whether, when the practice and laws of the Church, the origin and nature of the contract, and the importance of that origin and nature being reverently felt, all demand a religious solemnization, any man can be justified in despising these claims

and setting up a new-fangled solemnization under the agency of laymen, instead of making "THE LORD A WITNESS BETWEEN THEE AND THE WIFE OF THY YOUTH¹."

The Church of Christ from the earliest ages, and the Church of England following that example, has ordained, by virtue of her reasonable and Scriptural authority, the religious solemnization of marriages. Therefore the members of the Church of England especially cannot themselves despise her ordinance, nor *encourage others* to do so, without *sinning against God*. And we may put it to reflecting Christians of all denominations, whether they can, with a safe conscience, set the example of encouraging disrespect for a solemnization, so consistent with primitive practice, so agreeable to Scripture in its spirit, its exhortations, its prayers, its blessings, and its covenants, and so vitally influential on the virtue and welfare of the community.

A contempt of these considerations will surely be but a bad beginning of a contract, under which the man expects obedience, and the woman faithfulness. How can a man lay a good foundation for obedience by an act of open disobedience to the Church, which St. Paul likens to the body of Christ; or the woman look for faithfulness, when in the very marriage ceremony she studiously *disunites* herself from the Church, by a comparison of the *inseparable*

¹ Mal. ii. 14. See Appendix, p. 126, &c.

union of which with Christ its head, St. Paul illustrates the *light* in which her husband should regard her *inseparable union* with him¹? How can either look for the kind, gentle, full, and scrupulous discharge of those numberless, but importantly influential duties, which no human laws can define, no human tribunal maintain, and which only a sense of Divine obligation, and the power of Christian love can enforce; when they both *ostentatiously disclaim* the *religious* sanctions of the contract, and have recourse to a *secular* officer, for the *express purpose* of proclaiming to the world, and certifying to each other, that they regard it only as a *secular* contract, and of *secular* obligations? Surely it behoves the religious minded to pause before he follows the new light of modern scepticism, and either adopts himself, or encourages in others the notion, that an institution of divine origin, and divine sanctions, so intimately connected with domestic and social happiness, is now all at once to change its form of solemnization, and to be placed on a level with contracts of man's invention, and of only man's authority. Can any sincere Christian greatly err, by following the directions of our learned and pious Protestant Reformers, avowedly based upon the practice of the Primitive Church; by entering into this covenant, instituted by God Himself, through the ministration of God's appointed serv-

¹ Ephes. v. 22, 33.

ants; by hearing from the mouth of God's ambassadors the awfulness, and duration of the engagements undertaken; or by invoking, with God's priest, with God's Church, and in God's temple, the Divine witness to the contract, and the Divine blessing to enable him to fulfil it? Can he err in complying with that form of solemnization, which (independently of its propriety and its Scriptural appeals and prayers) has by long usage become venerable in the eyes of the people, and greatly assisted in promoting reverence for the covenant thus entered into? But may he not err, and grievously err, both to his own detriment, and to the offence and fall of many a weak brother, if, by adopting modern innovations, and casting contempt on this venerated form under which his own parents were joined in marriage, he shall do aught to diminish the sanctions of matrimony, and cause the ordinance of *God* to be regarded as only the ordinance of man?

The legislature has thought fit to legalise marriages made before a secular officer. But that amounts only to a *permission* to those, who may not take our views of the religious nature of the contract, or who have other objections to the religious solemnization of marriage, to enter into its engagements according to their own views. It does not amount to a *denial* of its divine origin, or its divine obligations. But, if it had amounted to this, it would not, in the remotest degree, have altered the

case. What *God* has ordained, *man cannot* alter: if it be sinful to enter into the married state otherwise than by the religious solemnities of the Church, the state cannot take away the *sin*. We have no concern *here* with mere questions of *policy*, neither do we contend, that the state ought to *force* any man to enter into this contract in a manner contrary to his conscience; but we limit the permission and power of the legislature to its *own province*: its permission may be an effectual release within that province, but no farther. It may exempt from the judgment of *human* laws, but not from that of *divine* laws: it may make that *legal* which was *illegal*, but it cannot make that *not sin*, which by *God's* law is adjudged to be *sin*. As ministers of God, and watchmen over our Israel, we feel it our duty to deal unsparingly with such questions, whensoever they come within the *province of religion*. We speak to kings and legislators, as well as to subjects and citizens, in the *name* of the "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS."

In this capacity I must deplore the necessity, though I do not deny the power, of the state to permit (as *far* as *human* law can permit) secular officers to join parties together in marriage. I must deplore it as tending, to lower the sanctions and obligations of marriage, to encourage disobedience to the Church, and to loosen the securities of domestic happiness and purity.

In this capacity I must warn the Christian com-

munity, that this *necessity* is an evidence of the “hardness of their hearts,” and that this *permission* of the state, though valid as regards *human* tribunals, is a permission to do what is *WRONG* in the *SIGHT* OF *GOD* ; and that those, who *avail* themselves of this permission, will not thereby be the less guilty before *Him*.

In this capacity, I must protest against a *civil* officer in a Christian country, (and in particular if he *profess himself a member of our Church*,) taking upon himself, under secular authority, the ratification of a contract specially *instituted by God*, and in *every age of Christ's Church blessed and bound by God's Priests*. And finally, in this capacity, I protest against the members of a Christian Church, turning from its ministrations, despising its blessings, rejecting its prayers, and going before a *layman* to stamp only with his authority that ordinance, of which *Jesus Himself*, and, from the days of Jesus, the *lawfully called ministers of His Church*, have pronounced, “*What GOD hath joined together, let not man put asunder.*”

APPENDIX,

REFERRED TO, PAGE 122.

I use the term “new-fangled” with reference *especially to this country*, wherein no such *practice* was ever known since it has been under Christian rule, excepting under Cromwell's usurpation. For a short period the nation was debased by that and

other follies ; but soon, sickened and disgusted with the consequences of their delusion, the people gladly returned to the customs, and the Church, which, in a moment of madness, they had deserted. But while I state this *special* application of the term “new-fangled,” I contend that the practice, to which I have applied it, is opposed no less to the spirit and practice of the *primitive Church*, than to the authority and customs of our own. I am fully aware, that Selden, whose research and learning are very great, raised a question upon the point, whether it was the general practice of the early Christians to celebrate marriage in the presence of a minister of the Church. But the authority of Tertullian appears directly against him, in the passage commonly quoted : “How can I sufficiently set forth the happiness of that marriage, which the Church makes or conciliates, and the oblation confirms, and the benediction seals, and the angels report, and the Father ratifies¹?” In several other passages of the Fathers, allusions to the part taken by the Church, in the solemnization of marriage, are made, and these passages have been adduced by Bingham, who points out the sources of Selden’s error.

For the purpose of ascertaining correctly the practice of the Church in this respect, Bingham lays down the following distinctions to be observed :—

“1st. Between marriages made among Christians one with another, and marriages made between Christians and infidels, Jews, heathens, and heretics. 2dly. Between marriages made according to the tenor and direction of the laws, and marriages made against them. 3dly. Between disapproving of the undue manner of a marriage, and declaring it absolutely no marriage, or utterly null and void. Now if the question be, first, concerning Christians marrying one with another, by whom the solemnity of marriage was performed? by a minister of the Church, or by any other? I answer, that it is most probable,

¹ Tert. ad Ux. lib. ii. cap. 1. cited from Bingham, Eccles. Ant. book xxii. chap. iv. § 1.

that in fact, for the first three hundred years, the solemnities of marriage were usually performed by the ministers of the Church. But, secondly, if Christians happened to marry with Jews, or heathens, or heretics (as they sometimes did), then as the Church did altogether discourage such marriages, so it is probable that the ministers of the Church never had any hand or concern in solemnizing them. But, thirdly, whilst the Roman laws allowed such marriages, it was not in the power of the Church to reverse or annul them, but only to punish the delinquents by her censures. Only in such cases as the laws prohibited, as all incestuous marriages; and children marrying against the consent of their parents, which the Roman laws not only prohibited, but many times annulled: I say, in such cases, the Church could go a little further, being warranted by the laws of the State, as well as the laws of God, to declare such marriages void. Fourthly, though the Church disapproved of any undue manner of marriage that the State forbade; as marrying without espousals and instruments of dowry, whilst the civil law was against it; yet she did not proceed so far, as to declare such marriages absolutely no marriages, or utterly null and void."

These distinctions amount to no more than I have admitted, when I remarked what I considered to be the real state of the question¹. I do not regard the practice of the primitive Church as essential to establish the obligations of our form of solemnization. The *authority* of our own Church is *sufficient* with respect to its own members; and I think the *reasons* I have suggested ought to have weight with pious and reflecting Christians, and good subjects, although not of her communion. But, nevertheless, I contend (whatever its worth) that we have also in our favor the example of the primitive Church.

¹ See page 121, line 23, &c.

SERMON XXXV.

ON THE DUTIES OF HUSBAND AND WIFE.

THE PRAYER.

“O God, who hast consecrated the state of Matrimony to such an excellent Mystery, that in it is signified and represented the spiritual marriage and unity betwixt Christ and His Church; look mercifully upon those entering into the same, that both husbands may love their wives, according to thy word (as Christ did love His spouse the Church, loving and cherishing it even as His own flesh) and also that wives may be loving and amiable, faithful and obedient, to their husbands, and in all quietness, sobriety, and peace, be followers of holy and godly matrons; through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

1 Cor. xi. 11—12.

NEVERTHELESS NEITHER IS THE MAN WITHOUT THE WOMAN,
NEITHER THE WOMAN WITHOUT THE MAN, IN THE LORD. FOR
AS THE WOMAN IS OF THE MAN, EVEN SO IS THE MAN ALSO
BY THE WOMAN; BUT ALL THINGS OF GOD.

THIS text is peculiarly well suited to those views of our mutual dependance which I have heretofore had occasion to enforce, and under a sense of which I am especially desirous that *relative* duties should

always be performed. Though I have felt it right to urge, upon the authority of religion, a ready acquiescence in all those regulations, and in that variety of rank, station, and employment, which are essential to the well being, and we may say existence, of society; yet I have anxiously endeavoured to show, that whatsoever sacrifices we are called upon to make, whatsoever obedience it may be our duty to render, should be offered as acts of *reasonable* and *religious* beings, not by *constraint*, but *willingly*, and in the consciousness that we are members of a body, which we cannot profit without ourselves reaping the advantage, nor without doing the work of that Lord who is the head of it. I have argued that service, regarded in this light, does not imply slavery, that obedience does not imply degradation; and that Christian independence is based upon a sense of our dependance upon each other, and upon an honest zeal to discharge with love and cheerfulness towards those with whom we are connected, the duties assigned to us by either religion, or the regulations of society. In perfect unison with these principles will the text be found, as an introduction to this discourse, which I purpose to appropriate to the consideration of the reciprocal duties of husbands and wives.

St. Paul therein expressly and emphatically urges those considerations, which, if duly weighed, will not fail to repel at once the perverse suggestions of pride and selfishness, to make the performance of

duty a labour of love, and the tribute of obedience a reasonable and a Christian offering. Mutual care to discharge sacredly all that the laws of God or man may require from the husband to the wife, or the wife to the husband, is represented not as a submission imperiously required, not merely as a commanded service from one to the other, but as that, in which *both* are interested and honoured, and in which *God* Himself is glorified. "Nevertheless," he says, "neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord. For as the woman is of the man, even so is the man also by the woman, but all things of God."

Yes, brethren, remember, this is no contest for superiority of one member of the body over the other, but the best regulation for the benefit of both; and especially remember—ALL THINGS OF GOD! Religion, the will of God, the love of Christ, the promotion of peace, virtue, and happiness in the body of Christ's Church must be your aim. The spirit of Christ, but not of vain glory and contention, must be the spirit under which you act. And acting in this spirit you will find nothing difficult, nothing painful. Whatsoever yoke you bear will be the yoke of Christ, and in mutual affection and mutual peace, you will find the truth of His saying, "My yoke is easy, my burden is light."

Having prefaced the subject with these remarks now let us proceed to the reciprocal duties of husband and wife, and, as in the former discourse, I

was guided by the order adopted by our venerable Church in the marriage service, I will again gladly avail myself of a director so holy, and a counsellor so judicious.

The Church in the vow, which she requires from the parties who intend, under her ministration and blessing, to enter into the engagements of this solemn and important contract, are classed under five general divisions:—

I. To love.

II. To comfort.

III. To honour.

IV. To keep.

V. To obey.

And in addition to these a declaration is required, that the compact is not to be dissolved, but by the hand of death.

Now it will be observed that, with respect to the first four of these divisions, the duties classed under them are incumbent upon *both* husband and wife, and will (unless so far as the peculiar circumstances of each sex may give rise to slight and occasional variations) be nearly similar. In treating of these therefore I shall speak with respect to *both* husband and wife, merely noticing such points of difference, as may appear to require explanation. With respect to the last pledge required by the Church, namely obedience; this is exclusively the duty of the woman, and therefore must be treated in that point of view. But I trust I shall be able to show,

that, when regarded upon the principles to which I alluded at the beginning of this discourse, this obedience, both in its own nature and on the grounds on which God requires it, is such as can neither minister to the pride of the husband, nor be reluctantly paid by the wife. But of this the proper place to treat will be the head of the discourse, under which I have classed it. We will therefore at once consider the duties of husband and wife, which come under the first pledge required by the Church, namely LOVE.

I shall begin this head with the warrant of God's word for the love required by the Church. That such love is a duty admits of no question; and I shall therefore content myself with citing two texts claiming it respectively from each party. To the Ephesians St. Paul says, "So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies: he that loveth his wife loveth himself¹." And to Titus the same Apostle saith "Teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children²." These texts will be deemed sufficient authority for the duty itself; but with respect to the practice of it I may be permitted to offer a few hints, observing herein with St. Paul, "That I only *give my judgment*."

The advice and suggestions, which a faithful minister may be expected to offer upon this point

¹ Eph. v. 28.

² Titus ii. 4.

should be based not upon mere theory, but upon *practical* views. It cannot answer any useful purpose, to reason upon a state of perfection, which does not exist ; or to picture to our readers visions of unmixed happiness and entire freedom from disappointment and bitterness, which can never be realized. The judicious Christian, who desires faithfully to discharge his duty, will look at his situation and his prospects in their true colours. He will remember, that he *himself is a descendant of Adam*, and has to *deal with beings frail and fallen* as himself. He will not therefore be unprepared to encounter difficulty, nor be daunted from his efforts by partial failure. He will know, that though the object at which he is to *aim*, may be perfection, yet he cannot expect to *attain* it ; but only to approach the *nearest point* to it, which may be permitted in this mortal state, and with our defective means and infirm purposes. From these considerations it is evident, that, if I mean to offer honest advice, I must regard the question in two aspects. First I must consider how those intending to enter into the state of marriage may lay the best foundation for fulfilling, as far as possible, the pledge of love which is required of them.

Secondly, I must offer advice to those, who either from *not* having *laid* that foundation, or from *other* circumstances, have been *more or less unable* to give to those, with whom they are united, that affection which is understood by the term *love*.

With respect then to the foundation of that love,

it must be laid both in making a proper *choice* of an *object* for our affection, and in cultivating in our *own hearts a disposition* to love. If a man or woman, intending to enter upon this holy state, shall give no thought upon the character of the person to whom they are to be united, or his qualifications to command their affections, if they shall be guided in their choice only by feelings of caprice, vanity, ambition, or avarice, then, in making the pledge to love the person so chosen, they offer, to say the least of it, a rash vow. And, if they afterwards shall find it impossible to act conformably to their pledge, it is only the fruit of their own misconduct, and the bitter harvest, which must be anticipated from the seed they have sown. Those, who seriously intend to fulfil the duty here spoken of, and who may reasonably hope to enjoy as far as human imperfection will permit, the blessings which a couple, united in the bonds, not only of wedlock, but of love, may contribute to each other in the voyage of life, must have paid careful attention, not to the mere *personal* attractions, but to the *mental endowments*, the *general temper*, and the *religious principles*, of the object of their choice. And, having acted with due consideration upon this point, and also with frequent prayer implored the guidance of God's Holy Spirit, they must next look to their *own hearts and conduct*¹. It will be the duty of

¹ See Sermons XIV, XV, XVI, on Self-knowledge.

both husband and wife to avoid as much as possible every act, every occasion, every topic, which may tend to create anger, or to give pain; and, on the other hand, by all reciprocal acts of gentleness, kindness, patience, and forbearance, to increase as much as possible, and to cherish, that attachment to each other in which their union originally commenced. And especially must they have *prepared* themselves for the discovery of those frailties, imperfections, and infirmities, which close acquaintance, and continual association, *must* bring to light in the best human beings, and in the most disciplined servants of Christ. We must not be offended at these things; our mind must have contemplated them beforehand. Our reason, our experience, the voice of man's wisdom and of God's word, have taught us these things; as Jesus told his disciples, that in the world they should have tribulation, but that they should not be staggered at its approach, as he had *forewarned* them of it. So must we be *prepared* for these inevitable consequences of human weakness; and we must be prepared also with the only remedy, the wisdom which cometh from above—the meekness, the long suffering, the gentle, healing, holy, spirit of Christian charity. We must even bear in mind, and be ready to apply to practice, the maxim in which a learned and talented writer has made a beautiful reference to the origin of our evils, and embodied in simple, but affecting language at once the self-knowledge, and the remedy,

necessary for the disease. "Discord," he says "*begins in mutual frailty, and ought to end in mutual forbearance.*" I have only here laid down a few *general principles*. The *application* of them must extend to thousands and ten thousands of words, actions, thoughts, and circumstances, which no treatise can comprehend, but which must be the business of every individual to modify according to his own situation.

Let us now turn to the other point, in which we proposed to consider this matter. Let us suppose a case (and would we could say that such cases were only imaginary and not frequent) in which the care of making a proper choice has been neglected, or other circumstances have rendered it difficult, perhaps impossible, for married persons to regard each other with that love, which is intended by the term when used by the Church. As we said before, where this arises from the neglect of the parties, they are only reaping the consequences of their own fault and folly; but yet, though it be sin, repentance is nevertheless open to them, and both reason, and religion, may be called upon to answer the question, —what is the *best* course they can take to *retrieve* their error, and *mitigate* the evils into which it has led them? The same question may be asked by others less directly culpable, and yet nearly in a similar situation. These may have given the best consideration in *their power* to the qualifications of the object of their choice, but have been *deceived* in their estimate of his character. Or afterwards

mutual infirmities may have given rise to feelings, rendering it almost impossible to regard each other with those deep feelings of personal affection, which are essential to conjugal love. This may arise from no apparent fault of theirs, but from want of sagacity, from their being unable to penetrate beyond the outward surface of character, or from the fair colouring with which the sanguine temper, and impetuous inclinations, of the young are apt to invest the object of their immediate desire. They may perhaps feel the effects of an *injudicious* choice as severely, as others feel those of a *corrupt*, and *worldly* choice; with only this difference, that the latter have more with which to reproach themselves, and can turn with less confidence to God, to ask deliverance from evils, which they have wilfully brought upon themselves by preferring the maxims of worldly prudence and interest, to the counsels of wisdom and inspiration. The former, though they may suffer the direct evils of their unfortunate choice, yet have the consolation of knowing that it was the result of their infirmity, but not of their disobedience. They see in it the cross laid in their path by their heavenly Father; they can look to him, and take it up, and bear it. But yet they, as well as the other may ask counsel of their own hearts, and of God's ministers, as to the best measures for alleviating the burden. It may then be fairly asked what is *their* duty? The answer is, that if they cannot attain the *highest* degree of love, there

is yet *another* which they are bound to cultivate, and which it is alike their duty, and their interest to cherish. They may not, indeed they cannot perhaps, under any circumstances, ever reach that pure and exquisite pleasure, which springs from the union of persons united by the bonds of love, brought together by qualities adapted to each other's temper and character, and constantly linked in closer amity by congeniality of sentiment and ever increasing esteem. This perhaps is the purest and highest of earthly affections. It is one of the choicest blessings which God vouchsafes to his creatures. But there is yet a lower degree of happiness and affection, to which, even under the unfavourable circumstances alluded to, we can aspire. We may at all events turn to the Gospel, and study the lessons of brotherly love there inculcated. We have fixed our lot, we have bound ourselves by a bond which only death can dissolve, we have taken our station in the family; and both duty and interest point out to us the necessity of making it as happy as we can to ourselves, and to those with whom we are associated. On this point I shall not further enlarge, but refer the reader to the ninth and tenth Sermons on "domestic union."

II. Turn we now to the second pledge given in marriage, namely COMFORT. This, it may be observed, is expressly mentioned only by the man, but it is required equally from both the man and the woman.

For it is stated, in the service of the Church, as the third purpose for which matrimony was ordained by God, that it was "for the *mutual* society, help, and *comfort*, that the one ought to have of the other, both in prosperity and adversity." The reason, for which the word comfort is specially used in the pledge given by the man, is because the power of comfort in adversity, or affliction, is presumed generally to be greater in the man, than in the woman. She is, as properly described, "the weaker vessel." The man, from his habits and constitution, is usually of a more robust frame of mind, as well as body; he is less sensitive, less gentle, more accustomed to the rude shocks of the world, and therefore more capable both of bearing up himself, and sustaining his partner, under calamity. But it is not to be supposed, that because a *greater* power is attributed to him, the woman has not also considerable means of imparting consolation to him. Though the man may be less liable to be suddenly cast down, by the rough assaults of calamity, yet the woman frequently rallies sooner against its continued effects. Though the man again may be accustomed and calculated to bear up sternly and not to lose his self-possession, yet his passions frequently burn stronger, and keep up their flame for a greater period, from the practice, to which he feels himself bound, of resisting their first impulses, and suppressing their outward demonstrations. When cast down, he is less able to rise. The gentler, and more

patient, character of the female will frequently enable her to recover from the first violent emotions of grief, and to soothe by those endearments, which are peculiar to her, the yet agitated and conflicting passions, which struggle within her husband's breast. She returns to him that comfort, which he first gave to her; and draws, in conjugal confidence, from him the outpouring of those feelings, which pride, or custom, frequently prevent him from venting and revealing to others. This sweet solace, and this duty of mutual *comfort* necessarily arises out of the first pledge—to *love* each other. It needs no special rules; they, that live together in love, will be prompted by a power superior to that of all precepts, and in constant activity, to administer to each other *comfort*, whensoever needed, and to the best of their ability. And great is that ability; for neither comfort, nor discomfort, can be administered with the same power, as by those who constantly dwell together, and are best acquainted with each other's necessities and infirmities. Comfort from those, with whom we are united in the bonds of conjugal love, is a balm above all price; the world cannot give it, nor can it take it away.

III. The third pledge is HONOUR. Under this term must be comprehended not only the inward sentiment of respect, to be cherished in our own breasts, but also the duty of both conducting ourselves with due respect to those with whom we are

united, and of being vigilant in maintaining their honour and reputation in the family and on all occasions. When a man pledges himself to honour his wife, or a wife to honour her husband, they respectively engage, that they will do nothing to bring each other into contempt, nor as far as they are able permit others to do so. It is not meant by this, that they are to be blind to each other's faults, nor to encourage each other in folly, and still less in sin. But wheresoever correction or instruction may be necessary, let a fit opportunity for offering it be chosen ; and let neither be willing to expose the weakness of the other to the sneers of their families, nor to suffer their dependants to treat them with ridicule. Let each of them know their own province, and let each be as anxious to maintain the authority of the other, as their own. If this duty be disregarded, great evils must necessarily ensue, and a general spirit of disrespect and insubordination, will be allowed to spring up among the members of a family, of which the evils will be felt by both parties, even though it be directed only against one. But especially must the *inward* sentiment of honour, one towards the other, be carefully nourished. For it must be the root from which the outward demonstrations must spring. We must not allow it to be weakened by the faults and infirmities, which may exhibit themselves. In fact Christian motives will always refer us to the vow, we have made, and induce us, notwith-

standing even a larger portion than ordinary of those infirmities, to pay most scrupulously honour to the station occupied by the person, even though the follies of the individual should render it impossible to entertain feelings of reverence to his person. And especially is this duty in Scripture commended to the husband, and he ought to bear in mind the reason assigned by the Apostle for so doing. The wife is described by St. Peter as the "*weaker vessel*." She has less authority, and less individual power, of vindicating it. Therefore it becomes doubly incumbent upon the husband himself to honour his wife, and also to protect her in the maintenance of the privileges of her station. "Ye husbands," said he, "dwell with your wives according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel¹." The wife in like manner is bound to give due honour to the husband, both because her own respectability is involved in the maintenance of his authority in a family, and also because that, which true wisdom teaches, is expressly enforced by the precepts of revelation. For the same Apostle who, as we above stated, directed the husband to honour the wife, is equally explicit in enjoining the wife to honour her husband. He teaches wives that by so doing they clothe themselves with the choicest grace, and ornament of their sex. Speaking of their adorning

¹ 1 Pet. iii. 7.

themselves, he said, "let it not be that outward *adorning* of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but *let it be* the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, *even the ornament* of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands; even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him Lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well¹." Thus, each honouring the other, will derive reflected lustre; for it is impossible, that the respectability of the one can be promoted, without a corresponding advantage being thence derived to the other. And in both will also be promoted the honour and glory of that gracious and almighty Being, who has said, "Those, that honour me, I will honour;" and whose blessing and favour will confer on both a never failing crown.

IV. The next class of duties are pledged and denoted under the fourth term used by the Church, namely, TO KEEP. The same duties are elsewhere spoken of in the service under the term, *cherish*. To cherish, therefore, and to keep each other, man and wife promise before the altar of God. Let us point out generally what is comprehended under these terms.

¹ 1 Pet. iii.

It is obvious that, in the first instance, to keep and to cherish must imply to *maintain* each other, and as far as their means extend, to exert themselves in procuring, and imparting to each other the means of subsistence, and such other advantages as may be necessary to their condition in life. On this point it is quite unnecessary to enlarge, because it is impossible for any to overlook the obligations of man and wife in this respect; it is their common care and common interest, and both of them must regard the gifts of fortune, or the produce of industry, as common stock prepared for mutual support. Mine and thine, in the language of man and wife, are terms which should always have a peculiar signification, and different from that in which they are used by those less closely connected. In their minds the distinction which these terms should indicate, must be rather that of *management*, than of *property*. As our text teaches us, and as other passages of Scripture emphatically urge, man and wife are both one flesh. Each should feel the same interest in the other, and know no use of property, but for the benefit of both. But to keep, and to cherish, imply yet more than the mere community of worldly goods. They imply a *general care*; that affectionate watchfulness, and those tender assiduities, by which persons so connected are enabled to enlarge each other's joys in prosperity, and to alleviate each other's sufferings in adversity. They imply that ever-watchful solicitude which is always alert, and which, to

use the beautifully descriptive language of the Psalmist, will “*keep*” the object of its attention “*as the apple of an eye*.” Who shall attempt to describe the mighty mass of human woe, the innumerable sources of human pleasure, the thousand, and ten thousand kindly ministrations, soothing offices, affectionate attentions, represented in the pledge, so simply but affectionately expressed in the words of our Church; “*To have and to hold, from this day forward, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish till death us do part*—according to God’s holy ordinance.”

But if the benefits implied in this pledge be calculated to turn so much bitterness from the cup of life, and to infuse in it so many drops of purest pleasure and consolation, how important must it be to the *poor*, that they should both understand and observe its obligations. The poor have generally none to whom they can look either for the comforts of their fireside, or for solace in adversity, but their partners in life. Let neither of them then, as they value their own happiness, as well as their duty to God, ever be unmindful of their duty in this respect. Let the sedulous attentions of the wife carefully provide for her husband those things which are necessary for his ease and sustenance, when he returns home weary from the labours of the day. And let not the vicious attractions of the ale-house, or of idle associates, draw the husband from his own domestic circle, and lead him to disappoint, or to

receive with sullenness, the tender assiduities of his wife. Those who have been accustomed to visit the habitations of the poor, and to reflect upon what they behold, must have been struck frequently with the cheerful and happy scene, which presents itself on the return of the labourer to his home, in which he finds every thing provided for his comfort by the care of an affectionate, and well managing, wife. In the cheerful countenances, in the cleanliness and attention, in the affectionate greetings, which are there presented, even the stranger will read the fulness of hearts, perhaps scarcely conscious of their own treasure, and will adore the mercy of that God, by whom the ordinance from which those blessings flow was instituted. But of all situations in which the value of the pledge to keep and cherish each other, given by man and wife, may be most clearly discerned, the *sick bed of the poor* is pre-eminent. There, when medical attendance is scanty, perhaps not to be commanded at all, where no service is to be bought, and when the sunken energies of mind and body loudly call for support, *there* do the blessings, pledged in the marriage vow to *love and to cherish*, shine forth in all their lustre. I will not attempt a description of these; my pen cannot describe them; nor do I consider that the heart of any can conceive them, unless experience should have taught it. I have however spoken of *keeping* and *cherishing* each other as incumbent on married persons, only with regard

to their *bodily* necessities. But I should leave untouched a far more important part of the subject, were I to omit their duty to keep and cherish each other in *those* things, which regard the *soul*. They are, it is true, coupled on earth only till death shall part them ; but they are brought together as companions in the voyage of life, to navigate together towards the haven of eternity. To this a beautiful allusion is made by St. Peter ¹.

V. The last class of duties I proposed to consider, are those comprehended under the pledge, TO OBEY. These, as I stated, are peculiar to the province of the woman ; but it is necessary that the man, as well as the woman, should have a right understanding of the *nature* of that obedience contemplated by the word of God, and promised in the presence of his Church. The command, that the woman should obey the husband, is clear and explicit. Two passages from Scripture will abundantly establish it, and declare the principle, on which it is to be rendered. In the third chapter of his Epistle to the Colossians, and at the 18th verse, St. Paul says, “Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands, as it is *fit in the Lord*.” And again, in the Epistle to the Ephesians ², still more particularly he enjoins this duty. “Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands as unto the Lord. For the husband is

¹ 1 Pet. iii. 7.

² Eph. v. 23, 24.

the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the Church : and He is the Saviour of the body. Therefore, as the Church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing." Herein does the Apostle lay before both the man and the woman not only the command, but also the reasons and motives upon which interest, as well as duty, urge its conscientious fulfilment. The principle, with which we set out in the text, is here kept in view. God directed, that man should command and woman should obey, not to create any difference between them, or to afford a foundation of pride on the one hand, or of humiliation on the other, but for the *sake of that order which is essential to the happiness of both*. Any person of common sense must see, that in a family some one person or other must be recognized as the head, whose decisions must be final in cases in which all cannot agree. For if, in any society whatsoever, *no rule were established* for the settlement of disputed points, or the prompt arrangement of requisite measures, if nothing could be done till its plan and expediency were not only debated, but also till *all* parties concerned should agree in opinion, it requires no great penetration, to see that the affairs of such a society must be continually impeded, and one half of what may be necessary, must remain under discussion till the time and opportunity for carrying it into effect had passed by. In mercy, therefore, and in wisdom, God has laid

on man the *duty* (for duty it should be called rather than privilege) of deciding. And every man of sense and proper feeling will so regard it. He will not be inclined, nor is it intended, that he should, in the discharge of this duty, arrogantly and capriciously contravene the opinions and wishes of his wife. He will on all occasions be anxious to consult with her; knowing that she has with him a common interest in the matter to be determined. And, if he cannot see it in the same light as she does, he will feel it his duty to act upon his judgment, not for the purpose of exercising superiority, but for *her welfare*, and in *obedience to that God*, who has assigned to each of them their respective stations and duties. St. Paul, in the passage I have recently quoted, speaks of the submission of the wife to the husband as being her head, even as Christ is the head of the Church; and he adds that Christ is the Saviour, that is, the guide, the preserver, and protector, of that body (namely the Church) of which he is the head. Therefore as the Church is required to give obedience to her head, for the sake of that protection she derives from it, so the husband, as the head of the wife, requires her obedience, for *her safety and welfare*. Every resolution he enters into, every submission he requires from her, must be dictated not by pride, but by love and affection. The Apostle clearly connects this principle with the injunction, that wives should submit to their husbands in every

thing. For, in the very next verse, he says, "husbands, love your wives, even as *Christ* also loved the *Church*, and gave Himself for it." Then, describing how Christ sought to save the Church which was subject to Him, he carries on the comparison, by saying, "*So* ought men to love their wives as their own bodies: he that loveth his wife, loveth himself." Hence it is clear, that man and wife, in this respect, ought to look upon themselves as one body; the submission, required by the one, is not a privilege for his separate advantage; nor is the obedience, conceded by the other, a service imposed to her detriment. They stand in such intimate relation to each other, that, like the hand or the eye, neither can say, "I have no need of you." And both of them must remember, that, whether obedience be required or paid, it must be as unto *the Lord*. No *sinful* compliance can be demanded or paid; obedience can extend only to things lawful, and must be rendered cheerfully in a spirit of religion.

I shall conclude this discourse by referring my readers to the inviolable nature of the contract here entered into. Death alone can dissolve it without sin. For though Jesus Himself does admit the separation of man and wife under one contingency, yet it must be remembered that this is a concession only to the just claims of one of the parties, who is thereby permitted to withdraw from a connexion, in which guilt is only on one side. But guilt there is. And therefore I have affirmed that the dissolution of

the marriage bond cannot, in the *sight of God*, be effected *without sin*, unless by the hand of death. And woe to the profligate and licentious violators of that contract ! Woe to those, who will dare to set at nought the ordinances of *God*, to break the *vows solemnly made in the presence of the Church*, and to render that institution, which was given for man's happiness and welfare, the instrument of misery and sin ! The man of pleasure may set at defiance these restraints, the man of the world may look upon them with indifference, the witty, the thoughtless, the licentious, may make the violation of them their laughing stock ; but for all these things GOD WILL BRING THEM INTO JUDGMENT. Before *His* dread tribunal the sentence of the violator of the marriage contract will be pronounced. The word of God has declared it. The plighted vow, the witness of the Church, the ratification of the priest, the peace of man, the ordinance of God, are not to be set at nought for the lust of the profligate, or the vices of the fashionable. The voice which decreed, that *what God hath joined together, it is not lawful for man to put asunder*, will on the great day of judgment be heard in accents, that shall strike terror on the boldest. And the knowledge of this, impressed by the *religious sanctions* under which marriage is solemnized, constitutes one of the best safeguards of the morals and the happiness of the country. Long may the day be averted, when this nation generally shall be led to separate the

marriage bond, from the sacred and powerful sanctions of religion : Come when it will, it will be a day fraught with sin and misery. In crime and impurity, in discord and debasement, in the degradation of her people, in the effects of Divine wrath, England will have to deplore the madness of man's daring to put asunder, what God has joined together.

SERMON XXXVI.

THE DEATH OF CHRIST SHOWN FORTH IN THE LORD'S SUPPER.

THE PRAYER.

O LORD and heavenly Father, we thy humble Servants entirely desire thy fatherly goodness, mercifully to accept our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving; most humbly beseeching thee to grant, that by the merits and death of thy Son Jesus Christ, and through faith in his blood, we and all thy whole Church, may obtain remission of our sins, and all other benefits of his passion, through the same Jesus Christ our Lord.

1 COR. xi. 26.

FOR AS OFTEN AS YE EAT THIS BREAD, AND DRINK THIS CUP,
YE DO SHEW THE LORD'S DEATH TILL HE COME.

ST. PAUL, before he delivered the words of the text, had been endeavouring to correct some errors and abuses, which had become prevalent among the Corinthians, and greatly tended to degrade the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, and to give offence not only to pious Christians, but to any rational or reflecting individual. I have, in the last sermon

on this Sacrament ¹, stated what those abuses were, and shown to what very serious evils they led. Our Apostle treats the subject with the solemnity it deserves, reproves the offenders, and carefully explains the true nature of this holy ordinance. And, in giving an account of its institution and purposes, he is remarkably express and particular, in reminding them, that, what he states, he received by immediate revelation from Christ Himself; and that it was therefore to be attended to with suitable reverence and obedience. “For I have received,” he said, “*of the Lord*, that which I also delivered unto you ².” With this preface and caution, he proceeds to describe the circumstances and intent of its appointment. And, in the words of the text, he declares that it was meant to be observed in the Church of Christ, so long as that Church should exist upon earth, or till the second coming of Jesus.

Now the whole tenor of the Apostle’s discourse and statements, as well as the text, have evidently in view one great object, which is to *impress the Corinthians with reverence* for this Holy Sacrament; and the text extends the scope of his instructions and argument to all Christians of whatsoever age or country, and clearly establishes the principle, that whatever circumstances, at that time, claimed for the Lord’s Supper peculiar reverence, and what-

¹ Serm. XXIV.

² Ver. 23.

soever purposes it then was intended to effect, were to *continue* in force, and unchanged, till He should come again. The points then which the subject taken in this view may suggest to our meditation, I shall present to you under the following heads:—

I. We will give a cursory sketch, with such passing reflections as it may suggest, of the circumstances upon which St. Paul dwells, to induce the Corinthians to regard the Lord's Supper in its true light.

II. We will consider how we can best fulfil that intention of the Lord's Supper, particularly mentioned here, namely, the *shewing forth* the Lord's death till He come.

I. I have prominently directed your attention to the object, which St. Paul earnestly pursues in this address to the Corinthians, and have stated that the circumstances, on which he dwells, were peculiarly intended to establish and cherish in their minds feelings of *reverence* for this holy institution, instead of those loose and sensual notions, with which they had heretofore regarded and profaned it. He begins his statement of the time and manner of its appointment by Jesus, with solemnly reminding them (as I have already remarked) of the *Divine Author*, from whom he derived the facts which he was now declaring. He reminds them that the *time* and the *circumstances*, in which the Lord's Supper was or-

dained, gave it the highest authority and solemnity; while the events and the person, which it commemorated, brought to their recollections subjects in which their highest interests were involved, and their love was most powerfully appealed to. He reminds them that, when Jesus had contemplated the last sacramental observance of the Jewish Pass-over; when He was about to accomplish a greater deliverance, of which the other was only a type or shadow; when He was about to lay down His life for their sakes, and to endure the agonies and shame of the cross for us miserable sinners; when He was to be betrayed and reviled by those whom He came to seek and to save—amidst these affecting and awful circumstances, St. Paul reminds the Corinthians, that the Lord's Supper was instituted. He reminds them, moreover, that it was instituted by Jesus Himself; that Jesus Himself particularly and expressly declared what it was intended to celebrate, even His sacrifice on the cross—the bread representing His body, and the wine His blood. And finally he tells them, that this was not a mere transaction of the moment, in which Jesus might have chosen to give this figurative representation of what was to happen to Him; but that it was the solemn ordinance of a Sacrament, which was to be *continually* received by His disciples to commemorate the benefits of His precious death, *until His coming again*; and that whosoever should partake of it without due reverence, and such dispositions

as should be suitable to this act of faith and love, would incur a deep guilt, and a heavy punishment.

Now it is clear, that in bringing together all these solemn and impressive circumstances, and also from the tenor of St. Paul's exhortations, and the misconduct¹ of the Corinthians, which called for those exhortations, that his aim is to bring together all that could affect their imaginations and affections, with the *importance* and *awfulness* of the Sacrament. His aim is to deter them from eating that bread, and drinking of that cup, in an irreverent or unworthy manner, as if it were a common meal. And does it not at once occur, that if St. Paul had believed, what the Romish Church pretends to be the case, that the bread became the actual substance of Christ's body, and the wine the actual substance of Christ's blood, and that the bread was to be *lifted up*, and *worshipped*, and *adored* as God present; that, if St. Paul had believed any thing of this kind, here, above all other, would have been the time and place, in which he would have said so? Would it not have been the argument of all others to impress the Corinthians with *reverence* for this Holy Supper, to terrify them out of their profane use of "this bread," and "this cup;" if he could have said, This bread which you use so profanely is God, you are to bow down and worship it; how dare you partake of

¹ See Sermon XXIV.

it with such irreverence, and receive it as a common meal? Would St. Paul, when collecting all the impressive circumstances and associations of the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, for the *special purpose* of creating reverence, and counteracting irreverence; would he, if there had been any ground for it, have omitted a circumstance so exactly, and so evidently, fitted to that purpose, as the bread being made the substance of Christ's body, and to be worshipped as such? But not a hint of the kind does he give: instead of telling them that the priest would make the bread God, he tells them only that, in eating that bread and drinking that cup, they *shew forth* the Lord's death (of which he had just reminded them of the affecting circumstances and important consequences) till He come. He speaks of it only as a sacramental symbol, to represent, and to be reverently taken in commemoration of, that death. And what was intended by this shewing forth the Lord's death, we proposed as the second branch of our enquiry in this discourse.

II. The word translated "*shewing forth*," means making public profession, preaching, declaring. It is frequently used by the inspired writers of the Gospel when they speak of preaching its great doctrines, and holding them up to the people both as the rule of their own faith, and to be embraced as such by others. And by *shewing forth* the Lord's death is meant representing it to the church, as

that atonement which was made for the sins of the whole world.

This duty of shewing forth the Lord's death in the Holy Supper may apply to either ourselves or to others.

With respect to ourselves; when we eat of that bread and drink of that cup, we have in these sacramental symbols continual memorials of those great and mysterious events in the scheme of our redemption, by the death and sacrifice of Christ; and looking to the authority on which the use of these memorials is founded, even the ordinance of the Lord Jesus Himself, we contemplate them as sure pledges and means of receiving the benefits of that death and sacrifice.

When we eat of that bread, and drink of that cup, our thoughts are carried back to the events of eighteen hundred years ago, and directed to the scene which St. Paul presents to the Corinthians. We remember with faith and gratitude, and love, the Saviour of the world, caring for us, even amidst the approaching horrors of the crucifixion. We are called upon to remember those hours of trial and tribulation, through which he passed for our sakes, and wherein his triumph was ours. When we eat of the bread we are reminded of the body of Jesus torn and pierced on the cross; when we drink of the cup we are reminded of his precious blood, shed amidst the taunts of misguided sinners. These elements too, of bread and wine, necessary

for the sustenance and refreshment of the body, represent to us the spiritual food and sustenance derived, by the faithful in the Lord's Supper, from Him who ordained it, and who shewed His care for us to the last. They teach us not to doubt the continual supplies of His grace, who, in the very night before He was betrayed, gave us this memorial of His love, these pledges of His continual support. He also, who gives us these pledges, has not only in them given pledges of His love, as manifested in those sufferings of which they are memorials, but He gives us therein no less sure pledges of His power, to fulfil the hope and confidence, which He has raised. For He, whom those symbols represented, is the true paschal lamb, of whose salvation the deliverance commemorated in the Jewish passover was the type and shadow. He is the Redeemer whose triumphs and power, the prophets and holy men of old saw afar off, and predicted. He is the one "mighty to save,"—the "Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." He, that redeemed us, hath power to preserve from all dangers and enemies, "ghostly and bodily." Him we set before us, and show forth to our mind's eye, when we partake of these pledges of His love and power. And how will the faithful communicant, *showing forth* thus the Lord's death till He come, find his heart burn, and his judgment convinced, under that affectionate exhortation, and that rea-

sonable inference, which our Church builds upon the events, "shown forth" in the Lord's Supper:—"Above all things ye must give most humble and hearty thanks to God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, for the redemption of the world by the death and passion of our Saviour Christ, both God and man; who did humble Himself, even to the death upon the cross, for us miserable sinners, who lay in darkness and the shadow of death; that He might make us the children of God, and exalt us to everlasting life. And to the end that we should alway remember the exceeding great love of our Master, and only Saviour Jesus Christ, thus dying for us, and the innumerable benefits which, by His precious blood-shedding, He hath obtained to us; He hath instituted and ordained holy mysteries, as pledges of His love, and for a continual remembrance of His death, to our great and endless comfort. To Him therefore, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, let us give (as we are most bounden) continual thanks; submitting ourselves wholly to His holy will and pleasure, and studying to serve Him in true holiness and righteousness all the days of our life."

But, as we have observed, *shewing forth* the Lord's death in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper implies a preaching or declaration of it, not only as a truth to be embraced by ourselves, but to be publicly professed before the congregation as the foundation of our faith and hope, and to be commended

to their hearts and consciences by our example and profession. "It is not only," says a foreign protestant¹, "to excite in his own breast a lively remembrance of the death of Christ, and of the fruits of it, that the Christian partakes of the holy Communion; he does it also to testify to *others* the sentiments with which he contemplates that death. With this intent he publicly, and before the church, partakes of the Lord's Supper; and it is in that sense that St. Paul uses the term *shew forth*, when he says, '*ye do shew forth the Lord's death.*' It is apparent that the term has reference to others of the faithful, in whose presence he partakes of that Sacrament. Every Christian, then, as often as he communicates, by that very act, declares, in the presence of the church, what he believes respecting the death of Christ, and his inward estimate of its importance. He does not rest satisfied with the mere consciousness of the magnitude and value of the benefit, which is set before us in the Lord's Supper, but he makes a solemn avowal of it; he renders thanks for this to God and his Saviour; he lauds and magnifies His holy name for this mercy publicly, in the presence of his fellow Christians. In fact, no part of the celebration of the Lord's Supper should be regarded as without its use or lesson. Every thing said, every thing done therein,

¹ Werenfels, to whom I am indebted for much of the materials of this Sermon.

has its meaning and its object. The communicant advancing to the holy table, to receive there the symbols of the body and blood of Jesus Christ, by that act publicly professes, that he looks for life only in that, which these symbols '*shew forth.*' When he takes and eats the bread broken, and when, in like manner, he takes and drinks the wine consecrated, he makes a solemn declaration and profession, that it is only through faith in Jesus Christ crucified, and in His blood shed, that he hopes to obtain salvation.

“ To put all this into a few words, and in a form which may bring it home to the heart and conscience of each individual ; as often as a Christian communicates, and comes to the holy table, to eat and drink of these symbols of the body and blood of Jesus Christ crucified, it is virtually the same as though he said with a loud voice, and before the whole church, in this act I publicly acknowledge, that I should be condemned for my sins, if the Son of God had not suffered death for me ; I moreover acknowledge and declare, that this death will profit me nothing, unless I shall take hold of it by a true and lively faith, accompanied with sincere repentance.

“ Hence the inference is obvious, that as it would be a fearful act of hypocrisy to communicate without true persuasion of the great truths shown forth in that Sacrament, and so loudly professed ; so it would be nothing but hypocrisy to pretend that this

solemn acknowledgment of those truths might be made, without our thereby engaging ourselves to a perpetual gratitude to God our Saviour, and to an entire devotion of ourselves to His service."

It has been thus regarded in every age of the Christian Church, down to the present day. Jesus Himself, as St. Paul in the text declares, ordained it for perpetual observance in His Church. The Apostles continued in the frequent habit of "breaking of bread" with the first disciples; the early Christians followed their example; and, though in after times corruptions and superstitions were engrafted on it, yet the institution was never lost sight of by the Church. In the purest periods of that Church this Sacrament was most frequently received, and this truly Christian profession most frequently made. We cannot do better than to imitate the example. Let us, then, not with hypocritical and unmeaning service, but in sincerity and truth, so *shew forth the Lord's death till He come*, that when He shall come, He may acknowledge us, and receive us into glory.

SERMON XXXVII.

DUTIES OF A CHILD¹.

THE PRAYER.

O ALMIGHTY GOD, who out of the mouths of babes and sucklings hast ordained strength, and madest infants to glorify thee by their deaths; Mortify and kill all vices in us, and so strengthen us by thy grace, that by the innocency of our lives, and constancy of our faith even unto death, we may glorify thy holy Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

MARK X. 14.

SUFFER THE LITTLE CHILDREN TO COME UNTO ME, AND FORBID THEM NOT, FOR OF SUCH IS THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

THE prophet Isaiah² reminds the Israelites, that the parental care of God over them commences even from the womb, and continues unabated to

¹ The following Sermons on the duties and circumstances of the different ages, are compiled chiefly from Eaton, Blair, Zollikoffer, Secker, Stevens, Wilson, Horne; taking their materials, and often adopting their language. I. E. N. M.

² Chap. xlv. 3, 4.

the last day of their lives. Our relation to Him, as our Creator, our Father, our King, is never interrupted through all the different stages of life—childhood, youth, manhood, and old age. From this unbroken relation to Him, which confers numberless and continual blessings upon us, necessarily arises the obligation of continual duty to Him, beginning from the moment we have any sense of duty, and never ending either in this world or the next. But, though the obligation remains the same, the character of the duties to God will vary, under the different situations and circumstances of the individuals from whom duty is to be rendered. Of all these varieties, it is not my intention to attempt the consideration; but I shall take one important division of them, that which results from the different ages of human life above-mentioned. It may be remarked, that I have spoken only of duties to God, but under that term I have in view duties to all His creatures; for His *will* is, that we should render to *all* their due, and also to our *own souls*. I therefore have mentioned, as the great obligation of *all* duty, the love and obedience we owe to God. And, in this point of view, though the *effects* of many of our duties immediately concern our fellow creatures, yet in the *principle*, as being done not unto man only, but unto God, they are tributes of duty to Him. Our observations, then, will not be confined to those acts which directly concern God's worship and honour, but I intend to

treat generally of some of the chief duties, and rules, which a sense of religion, and a desire to do God's will in all the relations of life, will excite us to observe at different periods of life. At present, however, we will consider the duties of childhood.

The remarks I have to make on this subject are addressed not solely, though chiefly, to children, but in some respects to those who have the charge of children, and are endeavouring to take advantage of that seed-time of life, and prepare for a good harvest in holiness. And for obvious reasons it will not be possible, (without rendering the discourse maimed and unconnected,) to avoid repeating the substance of some of our observations on the duties of children to their parents, and on the education of children.

No exact age can be named, at which the duties of children commence, because that period must depend upon the capacity of distinguishing between right and wrong, and of comprehending instruction. This will take place sooner in some children than in others, according to their respective abilities and means of knowledge.

But we know that such duties begin from a very early age, and that their range gradually becomes more and more extensive, as the child's faculties and information are enlarged. Samuel¹, for example, though a child, was not only dedicated to the

¹ See 1 Sam. ii. & iii.

Lord, but ministered before Him, and was favoured with special revelations of God's will, and made to deliver prophecies of a most important nature. Josiah also, when only eight years of age, was distinguished for his piety and zeal for the worship of God¹. And, when citing these examples, we should be wanting not only in a proper national pride, but also in gratitude to God, whose was the gift of this ornament and aid of the Protestant Reformation, if we were to omit the mention of our *own British king, Edward the Sixth*², whose piety and sweet-

¹ 1 Chron. xxxiv. 1—7.

² "At his coronation, when the three swords, for the three kingdoms, were brought to be carried before him, he observed, that there was one yet wanting, and called for the Bible: 'That,' said he, 'is the sword of the Spirit, and ought in all right to govern us, who use these for the people's safety, by God's appointment. Without that sword we are nothing; we can do nothing. From that we are what we are this day—we receive whatsoever it is that we at this present do assume. Under that we ought to live, to fight, to govern the people, and to perform all our affairs. From that alone we obtain all power, virtue, grace, salvation, and whatsoever we have of divine strength.' Child as he was, so well had he been trained, and so excellent was his moral and intellectual nature, that he was capable of thus thinking, and thus expressing himself. One, who was about his person, says of him, 'If ye know the towardness of that young prince, your hearts would melt to hear him named: . . . the beautifullest creature that liveth under the sun; the wittiest, the most amiable, . . . and the gentlest thing of all the world.'—'No pen,' says Fuller, 'passeth by him without praising him, though none praising him to his full deserts.'"—*Southey's Book of the Church*, vol. ii. p. 105.

ness of disposition, at the age of *nine* years, conspicuously adorn the page of English history.

These facts, and the principles we have stated, are confirmed by the yet higher authority of Jesus Himself, who, in the text, *invites little children to come unto Him*. The passage is very appropriately introduced into the office of *Baptism*, as an unquestionable authority, both for their fitness to partake of the grace of the Gospel, and for their capacity, and consequently their obligation, to perform some of the duties of the Gospel covenant. It shows that our Heavenly Father permits, nay requires, our first thoughts to be turned to Him. "Whom," said Isaiah, "shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? Them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts. For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little¹." An early beginning in the course of piety and religion, and a continual advance, are required.

The duties, as I have already hinted, must be confined, in childhood, to a small range, which will be continually enlarging, as they acquire more knowledge. And these duties will relate to *God* and to *man*. I will address my youngest readers upon their duties, under these two heads.

1. With respect to God. You will be taught,

¹ Isaiah xxviii. 9, 10.

my young friends, and will read in your Bible, that God created and preserved you; and also when, by sin, all mankind had become subject to the eternal punishments of His justice, and abhorrence of wickedness, Jesus Christ died to save us from this terrible sentence. Of the great goodness of God, in the last of these mercies, you will not, perhaps, have so clear a knowledge, or so deep a sense, as you will when you grow older, and can understand better the guilt of man, and the dreadful danger from which Christ died to redeem us. Your mind will more readily conceive God's power, and goodness, in *creating* and *preserving* you. From thinking often on these, you will learn to feel how good a God we have rebelled against, and how great a God we have offended. You can all of you understand God's goodness in taking care of you when you could do nothing for Him, or for yourselves. You can judge, that no man could have made all the beautiful and wonderful things, which you see on every side. You can perceive God's wonderful power in forming the sun to give light in the day, the moon and stars by night; the earth, with all its green fields, its beautiful flowers, its useful and pleasant fruits; the rain and dew, to make things grow for your food and pleasure. You can perceive how wonderfully good He has been, in taking care of every thing, and of yourselves in particular; how He has clothed the sheep with their warm wool; given the birds their wings; the fishes their fins, to

row them along in the water, like the oars of a boat. How He has contrived for the tiny insects, that dance about in the air and sunshine, their powers of life and enjoyment; so that even the little gnat is made with more nicety, and all his movements directed by a machinery, more perfect and delicate a thousand times than that of the most beautiful clockwork. And, with respect to yourself, He has been even more bountiful and wonderful. He gives you a body furnished with all that is necessary for your support and enjoyment; He gives you a mind to think and learn; and a soul to live for ever in heaven, if you will enter in by the Gospel of Jesus. He made your parents love you, and take care of you, when you were helpless infants; He raised you up all your good friends, when you could not have known where or how to seek for them: so that without these parents and friends, and God's continual care, you could not have lived one hour. These, and many other blessings and mercies, you can easily and early understand; and you can also understand, that you could do nothing to deserve such goodness, and therefore ought, above all things, to love that good God from whom it proceeds.

And, when you understand and feel these mercies as you ought, you will wish to know more of His nature and works, to search out His will, to endeavour not to lose His favour and protection. "Remember thy *Creator*," says Solomon, "in the days of thy youth." You will advance step by step, from

remembering His goodness in *this* character, to understand His goodness in redeeming the life which He first gave. Your steps are first planted on earth; but you will ascend thence to heaven, and be shown greater things than these. In childhood you “speak as a child,” you “think as a child.” But even the child may advance beyond the mere *knowledge* of these; he is *thankful* for them, as well as conscious of them. And my youngest friends can easily understand, that if these blessings of God are *needed*, it is but reasonable that we should *ask* Him for them, and thereby *acknowledge* Him as the giver of all good. You can all understand, without any difficulty, that truth which St. Paul sets forth, as the very foundation, and first act of *faith*: “they that come to God, must believe that He *is*, and is a rewarder of those that *seek* Him.” Therefore you will *seek* Him in daily prayer. You must not forget any morning or evening, to pray for what you want, and to thank Him for what He has done for you already. All those that you love, all things that you enjoy, He made, He preserves, and He could at any moment take away from you. You can see, then, that you ought to pray to Him, and thank Him daily and earnestly.

But, if you are grateful, and anxious for His protection, you will not think that you are to do nothing more than ask Him, or that while you expect Him to please you, and do what you desire, you are not bound to please Him, nor to do what

He commands. You cannot fail to understand, that it would be very foolish, and very offensive, to be asking God to favour you, when you are doing every thing that He bids you not to do, and refusing to do what you know He wishes done. You would not do so to your earthly friends and parents. You would know, that this would not be the way, to incline them to listen to your petitions; nor can you think this the way to incline God to hear your prayers. Moreover, all that God does for you, shows how good and merciful He is; and you can understand, that He, who is good Himself, must love goodness in others, and be displeased with those that act against His good designs to make His people happy. You cannot, therefore, reasonably expect Him to listen to your prayers, for things necessary to your happiness, when you act in all things against the peace and comfort of those about you; when you are proud, stubborn, spiteful, cruel, dishonest, or indulge in any feelings, or acts, which hurt, or cause unhappiness, to either man or the brute creation. All manner of wickedness you must know to be displeasing to Him; and to ask of Him favours and blessings for yourself, while you are injuring others, and thus doing things displeasing to Him, you must be aware, would be offering Him insults, and not likely to induce Him to grant your prayer. You can understand also that this God who made, and takes care of all things is every where present, and sees, and knows, what

every living creature either does, or says, or thinks. If, therefore, you desire His favour, and fear His displeasure, you will not speak of Him with disrespect, nor think, nor do any thing, that shows contempt of His laws. You would not dare to do this in the presence of a king, nor any great man, whose protection you desired, or whose anger you feared. How then shall you do it in the presence of the KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS? If you would avoid doing things to excite His anger, and would seek to do His pleasure, you will be glad to be taught (both by those who have learned more than yourself, and out of God's word the Bible) more of His nature and His will, accordingly as you advance in age and understanding, and are more able to comprehend this excellent and important subject. For many things that your young minds cannot receive yet, and many other things, of which you cannot comprehend the reason now, will be made clear to you, as you grow older, if you will but attend to those whose age and office fit them to offer you instruction in what you ought to know. Therefore I will now take a few of those duties to *man*, which a child should be most anxious to perform; if he would grow in grace and knowledge, if, like His Saviour, he would grow "in wisdom, as in stature, and in favour with God and man."

I. My young friends, be *ready and willing humbly to receive instruction*. You must receive a great

deal upon the authority of your teachers, as they are more experienced than yourselves, and as, at your tender age, your judgment cannot comprehend the reasons of every thing. Some truths you commit reverently to memory, and in after life, when your judgment becomes mature, and your knowledge more extensive, you will find them of the greatest advantage, both to direct your course, and strengthen you in piety and holiness. With respect to both those truths, which you receive upon the authority of others, and to those truths, of which, by *instruction*, you can understand the reasons,—your progress will be more easy to yourself, and more encouraging to your teachers to exert themselves in improving you, if you shall be *docile, humble, and attentive*. A stubborn, conceited, and careless child, will remain always in ignorance, and at last fall into sin and misery. He will bring down upon him the punishment of his teachers, lose the love of his friends, and incur the displeasure of that good and powerful God, on whose favour he depends for all he needs, and all he delights in.

II. The next duty to man, which I shall recommend to your particular attention, is that of *obedience* to your parents, and those under whose charge and teaching you may be. I say nothing here of the *divine command* to *obey your parents*, because I have already treated of that in the Sermon on the

Duties of Children to their Parents ¹. What I urge here is *general* obedience to them and to *all*, who are charged with either instructing you in knowledge, or putting upon you those restraints, and regulations, which may be necessary to establish both good principles and good habits in you, while you are young. You, as yet, know but little, and therefore cannot judge of the reasons, by which such persons may be guided in the rules laid down for your conduct, or the tasks marked out for you to execute. You will, in consequence, perhaps sometimes be apt to think their commands harsh, or their restraints useless, when, in truth, they tend to both your real welfare and happiness. Persons who have lived many years, have studied, and have acquired knowledge and experience, see the *remote* effects of early practices and habits, and their connexion with your bodily and spiritual interests, and with the formation of your general character. They see reasons, which you cannot see, till you shall have their experience, for denying you in many things, and accustoming you to labour in many things. You must, if you wish to benefit by their care and wisdom, commit yourselves to their direction, and cheerfully exert yourself to do what they teach, though it may seem disagreeable to your inclinations. For example, you might think it much more to your pleasure and comfort, if your teachers or parents, instead of

¹ Sermon XXV.

insisting upon your attendance at church on Sunday, would permit you to play about in the fields. But you would perceive, as you grew older, that this would be not only encouraging you to disobey and displease God, but also laying the foundation of sin and misery; and that you would find yourself disappointed in even the pleasure you expected.

Or again: you may fancy your parents, or masters, are putting upon you an unnecessary restraint, because they will not allow you to keep company with certain other children, that you would like to play with. But your parents and masters are much better judges of the real characters of children, than you can be. They know that you would be led into evil by such company, and therefore, for your good, they forbid you to join them. Obey their commands; and not only obey them, but obey them with good-will, and with a thankful sense of their kindness in taking such care of you. Be just as careful to do what you *know* they *wish* you to do, whether they expressly tell you or not, whether they are present or absent. For by any other course of conduct you would not only be wicked and ungrateful for their attention, but also *deceive* yourselves (not them) to your own destruction.

III. When you happen to do wrong, and are re-proved, or even punished, do not be sullen or stubborn, but remember that it is for your own good

you are corrected. Instead of being angry with those who correct you, be angry with yourselves for having committed faults, or encouraged dispositions which need punishment. Do not be rebellious against those who would make you wise and good, and thus happy; but turn your resentment against your sin, which is your real enemy, the real cause of your punishment, and the worst disturber of your peace.

The last duty I will mention to your parents and teachers is, that you love and reverence them. This will make all your other duties easy and pleasant. Nothing will be more delightful to you, than to do what you think will gratify those who have been good to you. And especially you must do this, *because you love and desire to please Jesus Christ, your Saviour*, who bade little children to come to Him, and laid His hands upon them, and blessed them, and said that of those, who are like good children, is His kingdom composed. Do you, young friends, continue to seek Him, and cleave to Him, and learn to be instructed in His holy word; so that He who on earth embraced and blessed little children, may embrace you "with the arms of His mercy," and make you "partakers of His everlasting kingdom ¹."

¹ Office of Baptism.

SERMON XXXVIII.

DUTIES OF A YOUTH.

THE PRAYER.

PREVENT us, O Lord, in all our doings with thy most gracious favour, and further us with thy continual help; that in all our works begun, continued, and ended in thee, we may glorify thy holy Name, and finally by thy mercy obtain everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

GEN. viii. 21.

THE IMAGINATION OF MAN'S HEART IS EVIL FROM HIS YOUTH.

No words can more plainly than those of the text, set before the youth the judgment of God's Holy Spirit, that the Christian soldier has an early lesson of vigilance to acquire, and has entered a service, for which his discipline must begin, as soon as he is capable of using either the offensive or defensive armour of the Captain of his salvation. The corruption of his heart is at work early, and he must early be on the alert to watch and oppose its dangerous movements. With respect to the duties, and

season of youth, we must make nearly the same general observations, as we did with respect to those of childhood. The suggestions we have to offer respecting the duties of a youth, are not interesting exclusively to him, but also to those who may have charge of him. And, with respect to the period of life to which our observations may apply, it may be difficult or impossible to draw the precise time which shall touch all cases, and mark exactly the point, wherein the character of *youth* may be said to be distinguished from that of *childhood*, or to be merged in that of a *young man*. As we stated in the preceding discourse, these periods must be different in different individuals, according to the maturity of their judgment, the diligence and capacity of those who educate them, or the particular circumstances into which they may be thrown, calculated either to exercise, or to render inert, their faculties. But it may serve as a *general*, though not accurate rule, if we fix the period of youth, as contemplated in this discourse, to the season of life between the ages of *twelve* and *twenty* years.

As *every* period of human life is a *step* in that progress, which we are all making towards the grave, and through it to eternity, the duties of each preceding period will be in some degree connected with those which follow; and will be usually only less perfect efforts, in which each successive period should exhibit continual improvement, and to which it will present some additional objects.

The duties of piety towards God, of docility, love, and reverence to parents, or other instructors, are not only to be cultivated in youth, as well as in childhood, but also to be cultivated to a greater extent, and with an increased comprehension, and sense, of the reasons on which they are founded. You now stand as a traveller ascending a hill upon an eminence, from which you can take a more extensive view of the surrounding objects, and perceive more plainly the point to which your road tends. But the difference of your position as a youth, will be better understood by comparing the several points of it, with those of a corresponding description, which we considered in treating of the duties of childhood.

In the case of a child, we observed that the goodness of God in our creation and preservation, would be probably the first step by which he would be conducted to the love of God ; and that the mercies of redemption, though taught to him, would make a less feeble impression upon his feelings, and would be rather viewed in the light of truths, acquiesced in, and acknowledged, upon the authority of our teachers, than of benefits properly appreciated by our understanding. But a youth will begin to advance beyond this point, and to love and reverence God, on the peculiar grounds of those blessings brought to light in the Gospel. He now prepares to take a new station, and more enlarged views. He was heretofore in the position,

in which the Church regarded him, when she admitted him, by *Baptism*, into the Christian covenant. She regarded him then as unable to estimate the benefits of that covenant, or fully to comprehend its obligations, and therefore left him under the guardianship and conduct of parents and sponsors, to watch over his unfolding powers of mind, and to imbue them, as they might be able to receive it, with more full knowledge of Christian truth, till he should be able to present himself to the Bishop, and take upon himself the vows and covenant made in his name in Baptism. I have already largely treated of the solemnity of the engagement, into which we enter in *Confirmation*, and of the preparation which is necessary, if we would enter into those engagements as we ought. A youth, then, is to be brought into a closer acquaintance with the ground-work of his hopes, and with the greatness of his privileges under the Gospel covenant. I exhort my youthful friends to endeavour to act worthily of that higher station, to which they are now invited, in the scale of Christian and intellectual advancement. You are now beginning to act more on your own judgment and responsibility. You are justly expected to exhibit an acquaintance with the leading principles of Christian knowledge, and to have a more comprehensive sense of the importance of the redemption of mankind by Jesus Christ, and of the benefits whereof we are partakers by the atonement He has made

for our sins. Though not altogether left to your own guidance, you are appealed to, more as reasonable and responsible beings,—you are more capable of understanding such an appeal. You cannot plead the ignorance of childhood. Your prayers and thoughts should begin now, not only to connect themselves more with those spiritual blessings, but also to excite you to such efforts as may be consistent with such a connexion. The Scriptures should be studied with increased earnestness and attention; and, as the application of them to your case becomes more familiar, you will be more and more thankful to those who have made it so, and will rejoice, like Timothy, that from a child you have known them, and are now more and more able to perceive their excellency, in making you “wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus.” The more you perceive the importance of the knowledge, the more also will you be desirous to co-operate with your parents and teachers, who are endeavouring to make you perfect in it.

Hence it will follow, that your docility, your fitness and wish to be taught, will advance to a more active disposition than the docility of a child. You will have greater inducements to self-exertion, and greater encouragement to perseverance, inasmuch as you will see more clearly the value of the object in view, and the usefulness of those measures which have already been adopted for your benefit

and improvement. Though your own judgment is beginning to act, yet you can perceive how insufficient it is for your guidance, and how much advantage is possessed, and can be imparted to you by those who have greater knowledge and experience. What you have attained by such aid, shows you more clearly what you may attain. Instead, therefore, of merely rendering a kind of passive obedience to their directions, it becomes a youth, who has any proper sense of duty, to be himself a voluntary and active agent in the work, working with his parents and teachers heartily and earnestly, being thankful that he has the benefit of their teaching, and sensible that his benefit is the object of their joint labours. You should, therefore, my youthful friends, diligently attend to all those studies which are marked out for you, but more particularly to those which relate to your heavenly calling, to your salvation, through Christ Jesus, and your escape from the condemnation which will overwhelm the wicked on the last day. And, if you would do this, you must take the Word of God for your instructor, and, remembering that it is God's word, receive it with humility and faith. Without that guide, many things, which will meet your notice as you advance towards manhood, you would be at a loss to account for, and thus might, at the outset of life, be involved in doubt and hesitation, and lost for want of a compass to direct your course.

The awful workings of human corruption, the prevalence of evil, can be accounted for only by the revelation of the Spirit of God, who hath known and declared the deceitfulness of the human heart, and the terrible consequence of man's fall. Your danger could not be clearly pointed out but by the same word, nor could a remedy and preventive of sin be satisfactorily offered to you, but by its authority. Christ, the sacrifice for the sins of the whole world ; Christ the way, and the truth, and the life ; Christ the Saviour, the Protector, the Guide of His church, must be made known to you, by early and continual study of the Scriptures, and by thought, and by prayer, that the perusal of them may, through the grace of God, turn to your profit. At home, at school, at church, your desire to be taught, and to improve in the knowledge of saving truth, and in godly practice, should be active, and make you not a hearer only, but a doer of that word.

But if you wish to adorn the doctrine of God your Saviour in all things, you must cultivate and abound in good dispositions. If the fountains are impure or scanty, you cannot expect the streams to be pure or copious : you must, therefore, take care to work with your parents and teachers in establishing holy and heavenly dispositions in your hearts, and in giving life an energy to these impulses. We cannot enumerate these dispositions, but we may give two or three cautions against mis-

takes into which youths are apt to fall, with respect to such dispositions. St. Paul commends charity as the first and most noble of Christian graces. And as charity means love of God and love of man, it comprehends under it sentiments of piety and reverence towards God, of gentleness, forbearance, forgiveness, meekness, and kindness towards all our fellow creatures. The more we exercise these feelings, and allow them to dictate our conduct, so much the stronger will they become in ourselves, and the more others will be encouraged to follow our example; and, on the other hand, the more we resist them, and refuse to give them vent, so much the more feeble will they grow in our own breasts, and so much the less will others be moved to cultivate them. Now there is no time more favourable to the growth of these virtues than youth. It is the time, of all others, when the heart is most open to the emotions of charity, and when kind and generous feelings are less opposed by the interests, the ambition, and the trouble, which in after-life choke them, and impede their activity. These impediments will too soon be reared against them; therefore let not the youth anticipate these obstacles, and create, by his own folly, others, at a time when the circumstances in which Providence has placed him, and the suggestions of a merciful God offer him a favourable opportunity of strengthening them, and preparing them to stand the storms, and the withering influences of worldly intercourse. Do

not, my young friends, upon any consideration, let a false shame, and foolish fear of being laughed at, or an equally foolish desire to do what wicked or silly companions applaud, induce you to suppress any pious feeling, any act of unaffected devotion, or any kind and generous emotions. Do not fancy that profaneness is wit, or that if it were, it would be less foolish in the sight of God, or less dangerous to your immortal soul. Do not give way to violent and angry passions, or imagine that malice, and a quarrelsome disposition are marks of nobleness of spirit. You know that these are not dispositions recommended by the Gospel, and you are old enough to know, that if you indulge them when young, they will grow with your growth, and render you more hateful to man, and more wicked in the sight of God. And there is no one practice in youth against which you should be more anxiously cautioned, than the ill treatment of animals. What is often begun for want of thought, and continued for want of timely reproof, grows into a confirmed habit of cruelty; and a youth, once of gentle disposition, advances in the practice of cruelty, till he becomes a brutal and ferocious ruffian, and sometimes is led to shed man's blood, and to perish himself ignominiously by the hand of man, with the prospect of the terrible wrath of God denounced against the cruel, and the shedder of blood. I would particularly direct the attention of those youths, and of the teachers and parents of those youths, whose calling

requires them to take charge of horses, or dogs, or other animals. It is shocking and disgusting to any person of common humanity, to see what wanton cruelty, what unnecessary blows, what excessive labours, are inflicted upon animals. My young friends, let me caution you against this dangerous and wicked practice. These poor creatures cannot speak to tell you what they suffer; but every blow you give them causes them agony, as it would to yourself. And though they cannot speak, God's Word has spoken for them, and told us, that *a good man is merciful to his beast*. But on this I shall not dwell here, only wishing to keep in view this particular point, that it becomes youths in particular to be on their guard, looking, at their period of life, as one that will lay the foundation of much of their future character; and that the virtues or the sins, which they cultivate now, will grow as they grow; the thoughtless practice of youth will root itself as the inveterate habit of manhood.

It has been observed that you are now at a time of life in which you do not merely *submit* to teaching as a child, but are of an age to see that it is for your profit, and therefore should willingly and thankfully assist those who are endeavouring to direct you in the right way. I need not enter into arguments to prove to you, what you must at once see, that all trick, and deception, and falsehood, will not assist, but counteract them. Every false appearance you can put on, will tend to mislead them;

but in deceiving them, you will be deceiving yourself to your own destruction. If they are to direct you aright, the more correctly they may be acquainted with your character and conduct, the better they will be able to do their duty towards you; the more you can deceive them, the more you will be acting contrary to what every youth may know to be his own interest, as well as duty. And this also will grow upon you as well as other youthful practices, (and indeed more rapidly,) till it becomes a rooted habit. For one falsehood generally requires another to conceal it, and the liar and hypocrite is gradually drawn into this habit, as a vessel is drawn into a whirlpool, to be finally engulfed and destroyed. The heart becomes harder with age; and if the frankness natural to youth cannot secure him when yet unpractised in fraud, what can he expect will be his fate in after life? Truth and sincerity, says Blair, are "the basis of every virtue."

"That darkness of character, where we can see no heart; those foldings of art through which no native affection is allowed to penetrate, present an object unamiable in every season of life, but particularly odious in youth. If at an age when the heart is warm, when the emotions are strong, and when nature is expected to show itself free and open, you can already smile and deceive, what are we to look for, when you shall be longer hackneyed in the ways of men; when interest shall have

completed the obduration of your heart, and experience shall have improved you in all the arts of guile? Dissimulation in youth is the forerunner of perfidy in old age. Its first appearance is the fatal omen of growing depravity and future shame. It degrades parts and learning; obscures the lustre of every accomplishment; and sinks into contempt with God and man."

The last point I shall touch upon respecting the duties of youth, is to remind him, that in all he does he is now of an age to understand, that he does it not only to profit himself, but also to please God, and those who take delight in his advantage and improvement. On the first of these, of doing your duty with a view to please God, I here need only refer you to those Sermons in which that motive has been urged¹. But with respect to those who labour, and take an interest in your welfare, especially your parents, bear in mind what a noble and delightful incentive you have to well-doing, now that your judgment is sufficiently matured to understand their care of you, and the gratitude due to them. You can now comprehend how full of comfort it must be to those whose affection for you should secure your love, that they may have before them a prospect, when they go down to the grave, of leaving you in the way that leadeth unto salvation. You can feel and comprehend, that while you

¹ Sermons I. XI. XII.

are laying the foundation of your future respectability and advancement in this life, and of your immortal hopes in the next, you are preparing for the declining years of those you love, and whose affectionate solicitude has watched over you, a consolation and pleasure of the purest kind. Nor should you, in contemplating this encouragement to well-doing, omit to look at the other side of the picture, and to remember the guilt and the punishment that will overwhelm him, who, regardless of his own soul, of the bitter sorrows of those who loved him, should aggravate the sorrows of a dying parent, by setting before him the spectacle of a son *“who forsaketh the guide of his youth, and forgetteth the covenant of his God; whose house inclineth unto death, and his paths unto the dead”*¹.

¹ Prov. ii. 17.

SERMON XXXIX.

THE YOUNG MAN'S MEANS AND OBLIGATIONS TO HOLINESS.

THE PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY God, by whose providence thy servant John Baptist was wonderfully born, and sent to prepare the way of thy Son our Saviour, by preaching of repentance; Make us so to follow his doctrine and holy life, that we may truly repent according to his preaching; and after his example constantly speak the truth, boldly rebuke vice, and patiently suffer for the truth's sake; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

ECCLES. xi. 9.

REJOICE, O YOUNG MAN, IN THY YOUTH; AND LET THY HEART
CHEER THEE IN THE DAYS OF THY YOUTH, AND WALK IN THE
WAYS OF THY HEART, AND IN THE SIGHT OF THINE EYES:
BUT KNOW THOU, THAT FOR ALL THESE THINGS GOD WILL
BRING THEE INTO JUDGMENT.

THERE is in this sentence of the royal preacher an awful strain of irony. In sarcastic and scornful description he places before the young the portraiture of sinful indulgence, sketches the potent and syren lusts, which invite him to drink deep of the cup of

pleasure, and then, in terrible derision, shifts the scene, and lays before the fool—I mean the *scriptural* fool, the sinner—the dreadful prospect of an avenging God, who, “for all these things, will bring *him into judgment.*”

I say, there is an awful strain of irony in this sentence; it has all the keenness, all the cutting scorn, which this figure of speech is capable, but none of the bitterness with which human disputants too often charge it. It aims not to hurt, and to provoke: it does indeed convey derision and scorn, but it is not personal; it directs them at an imaginary character; it strikes at the vice alone; it is levelled at the *folly* of the sinner; it sets before him the picture of his situation in a most awful and humiliating light, not to pain or to irritate him, but to warn him of his *danger*, and to show him the madness of his course. Indeed, my younger brethren, the portrait well deserves your attentive consideration. Health and pleasure may solicit, evil associates may invite, the world, the giddy, the gay, the thoughtless exuberance of your fresh manhood may exhilarate; but they will not excuse your walking in the ways of sin. Your God, your Saviour, nay, your Judge, at no period of life relinquishes His sovereignty over you; He has not allowed you at any time to yield to the uncontrolled lusts of the flesh, or to give place to the devil; it will not avail to plead the *temptations* of your time of life.

It is in scorn and derision that the royal preacher

exclaims, "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the ways of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes."

But know, yes, remember, remember as beings who have immortal souls, as beings whose path is towards eternity, whether in weal or in woe, "know that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment."

Under this awful appeal of the royal preacher I would now proceed to the consideration of the duties of the young man.

In discussing those of youth, I assumed the age to which my remarks were intended to apply, to be between the ages of twelve and twenty years. You will consider those which I now offer to fall generally upon the season of life between the latter period, and the age of thirty.

Every one must at a glance perceive how very important a season this is, and how much our conduct in it tends to influence our future character, and to determine our destiny both here and hereafter. I shall, therefore, give greater attention, and take a fuller range in my observations on this part of our life, than upon either those which precede it, or those which follow it. Taken either in a worldly or in a religious point of view, there is no object of greater and more solemn interest, none that affords more materials for reflection, than a young man going forth into life. At that period parental

authority is relinquished, and no other control is usually attempted than that of counsel and remonstrance; the appeal is made to his judgment, and to his conscience; he follows the dictates of his own mind; and if he perish, his blood is on his own head.

That the young man must flee youthful lusts, that he cannot escape the awful punishments of an offended God, under the plea of his being led into sin by his passions, is evident from the words of the text. And as no plea is more common than the difficulty, nay, almost *impossibility*, of a young man being able to follow a course of holiness, and preserve his body in that subjection, which shall make it a fit habitation for the Holy Spirit of God, and shall save it from the consequences of that terrible judgment, which is declared in the text; it obviously claims our immediate notice. This plea stands on the very threshold of our subject, and must be overthrown before we can enter upon it. For it will be utterly useless to point out the dangers and advantages of the young man's situation, if he is prepossessed with an opinion, that he can neither escape the former, nor avail himself of the latter, to any effectual purpose. He who fancies what is required to be almost impossible, will be likely to refuse it altogether, or at least to put it off to some "*more convenient season.*"

I shall, therefore, begin with showing, that it is quite in the power of the young man *not* to "walk

in the ways of his heart ;” and what he sees to be possible, he may set about performing heartily, and with good courage.

It is not meant to be affirmed, that the young man can be entirely free from the errors and sins into which, from the imperfection and corruption of our nature, he is continually liable to be betrayed ; but he may, by a due exertion, and a proper use of the means of grace, which in mercy are granted him, he may, by these, withdraw himself from occasional snares, recover from sudden falls, and avoid the dominion of habitual and flagrant wickedness.

1st. The first argument in proof of this may be drawn from the purpose, and comprehensive nature of the Gospel of Christ. He came into the world to call *all* men to repentance ; *no* age is excepted ; the invitation to come to the waters, is to *all* that thirst ; the exhortation to put off the deceitful lusts, to shake off the bondage of sin, and to serve the living God, is *universal*. And the Gospel is styled the “ grace of God, which bringeth salvation to *all* men ¹.” Under it are “ given to us all things, that pertain unto life, and godliness, through the knowledge of Him, that hath called us to glory and virtue. Whereby are given to us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these we may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust ².”

¹ Titus ii. 11.

² 1 Pet. i. 3, 4.

Christ, therefore, considers all as capable of being His disciples, in word and in deed ; and excludes not even young children from coming unto Him, and being partakers of the kingdom of heaven. In conformity with this design of the Gospel, and with the conclusion deduced from it, that the young man may frame his life according to its dictates, we have,

2dly, Instances, and many instances are upon record, of young persons who have overcome the temptations and lusts, so powerful at this time of life, and distinguished themselves by their obedience to the commandments of God, and their devotion to the cause of holiness.

We have already noticed the cases of Samuel and Josiah, who, from their earliest age, were distinguished for their piety and virtue. Moses appears, from the time he came to years of discretion, to have immediately embraced that faith, for which he is mentioned with honour by St. Paul, and by which he “refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season ; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt ; for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward.”

Hezekiah, also, is another example, not only of a young *man*, but of a young *king*, amidst all the luxuries and temptations of a court, becoming eminent for his piety, and his love and patronage of religion.

If we proceed to the New Testament, we shall also find many similar examples equally encouraging as establishing the fact, that the subduing of youthful lusts, and the most devoted attachment to religion, are not at all impossible or unusual at the age we are speaking of. John the Baptist, though but a young man, obeyed the motions of the Spirit, quitted the cheerful haunts of society, dwelt in the wilderness, and submitted to all the privations and austerities requisite for adapting him to sustain the character, which the spirit of prophecy had marked out for him. Young as he was, he forsook all to be the messenger before Jesus, and to prepare his way. Boldly, and fearlessly did he preach repentance to all; unsparingly, and without respect of persons, did he rebuke vice, and called upon all to forsake their sins, and come to the light of the Gospel. His namesake, John the Evangelist, the faithful witness, the beloved disciple of his Master, was another instance of a young man forsaking all, to follow Jesus. Even the rich young man, whose *failure* in one point is recorded in the Gospel, is an example of the possibility of a young man subduing many passions. For in many points he had made such proficiency, that Jesus *loved* him, and told him there was only one thing more which was wanting in him. In that one thing, indeed, he would not make the required sacrifice; but the request of Jesus shows, that it was in his power to do so; for Jesus was a Master too just and too gracious to

desire any thing impossible from his servants. I will only notice one more example, out of the numbers which might be adduced, and that is the case of Timothy, who, though a young man, was so distinguished for his piety and virtues, that St. Paul invested him with the office of Bishop, and both reposed in him the greatest confidence, and felt for him the warmest affection. He congratulates him upon his early knowledge of those Scriptures, which are able to make us "wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus." And he thus describes the natural tendency of being well versed in the Scriptures, and the effects which they may reasonably be expected to produce in the young, as well as in the old. "All Scripture," he says, "is given by inspiration, and is profitable for doctrine, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

These advantages they offer to all who are willing to embrace them, and St. John addresses his *young* converts as having embraced them. "I write," he says, "to you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one;" and again, "I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one."

And in every period of the world many bright examples have shone forth, of young men eminent in virtue, and in the practice and faith of the Gospel

of Christ. Even in our own days such examples are within the range of our experience, and we may most of us have met with young men, whose lives incontestibly prove, that, however strong the passions may be at that period of life, it is far from being impossible to subdue them, and to become, by the grace of God, and through the merits of our Redeemer, pleasing to the Lord, and acceptable in His sight.

Lastly, we may observe, that if the passions of the young man be strong, his judgment inexperienced, and his temptations many, he is hitherto less corrupted by the world, and has not submitted to the dominion of evil habits. And it will be found a task at least as easy to prevent the first growth of evil habits, as to extirpate them after they have once been permitted to take root. It will be at least as easy to guard against the slavery of sin, as to break off its yoke. The young man has to contend with no long established vices; he has not yet deadened the power of conscience; he has not, as the Apostle describes it, "*given himself over* to all manner of lasciviousness," has not become "past feeling;" nor is his conscience yet "seared, as it were, with a red hot iron."

In what way soever, then, we regard the subject, whether we consider the comprehensive character of the Gospel promises, exhortations, and threats; not at all limited to any particular age—whether we contemplate the recorded examples of past ages,

and the experience of our own—or whether we examine the situation and difficulties of a young man; we see no reason to assume, that there is any thing like impossibility for him to cleanse his way, and to become a bright and shining light to the Christian world.

It is necessary to dwell upon this subject at some length, because the notion of its being impossible for a young man to cleanse his way, too often lies at the bottom of his conduct, in pursuing the path of sin. Though he may not bring himself to the positive *statement*, that the performance of his Christian duty is impossible, yet he *virtually acts* upon some such conclusion. He commits much and heinous sin, upon the plea that, at his time of life, it is pardonable, as being almost, if not altogether, unavoidable. There cannot be a more pernicious maxim. What man will try to pursue a course of holiness, which he considers himself incapable of running? What man will commence a work, which he has made up his mind to think is impracticable? There are many means, by the adoption of which we may most efficaciously carry on the great work for which every man is sent into the world; but these are not the subjects of our present consideration. I shall only now exhort all young men not to deceive themselves with the notion, that their Christian duty is impossible; that they are so surrounded by temptations, so goaded by passions, that they must put off, to a more advanced period of life,

the season for showing forth a Christian example, and for adopting those severer rules of conduct, which become the Gospel of Christ. Headstrong as may be our passions (and they will daily become more headstrong by indulgence), they form no excuse for yielding to the dominion of pleasure and wickedness at *any* period of human life. We may be assured, upon the authority of the royal preacher, and of all Scripture, that however impossible we may persuade ourselves it is to avoid these things, God will see the matter in a very different light, and for all these things will infallibly bring us into judgment. Let us rather apply to our Christian pursuits that maxim, which the children of this world often apply to their temporal undertakings with the greatest success; viz. that every thing is possible to him, who is *persuaded* that it is possible. Often as this is true in temporal matters, it is much more so in spiritual concerns. We know, upon infallible authority, that the "grace of God is sufficient for us." With the blessing and aid of the Holy Spirit, *all things are possible*. If you, young men, then, would but apply this truth to the encouragement of your exertions in the ways of Christian perfection, with only the same diligence and earnestness as you do the other, to the attainment of your temporal gratifications, you would not fail to find a corresponding return. The remotest *chance* of gain, or pleasure, is never disregarded; but the *clearest prospect* of spiritual profit is looked at, too often, not

with zeal and desire, but to discover what *difficulties* present themselves; not with the intent of trying what *may* be done, but with a *disinclination* to try to do any thing *at all*. This is not the plan to be followed by him, who seeks to gain the prize of our high calling in Jesus Christ. This is not the plan recommended by St. Paul¹ to his young friend and disciple Timothy, with which I shall close this discourse, and recommend the subject to your meditations.

“ But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses. I give thee charge, in the *sight of God*, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession; that thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, till the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

¹ 1 Tim. vi. 11.

SERMON XL.

THE YOUNG MAN CAUTIONED TO TAKE HEED TO
HIS WAYS.

THE PRAYER.

O God, the protector of all that trust in thee, without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy ; Increase and multiply upon us thy mercy ; that, thou being our ruler and guide, we may so pass through things temporal, that we finally lose not the things eternal : Grant this, O heavenly Father, for Jesus Christ's sake our Lord. Amen.

PSALM cxix. 9.

WHEREWITHAL SHALL A YOUNG MAN CLEANSE HIS WAY ? BY
TAKING HEED THERETO ACCORDING TO THY WORD.

OUR last discourse was upon that awful and important declaration in the book of Ecclesiastes ; in which, after noticing the propensity of the young man to indulge his youthful passions, and to yield to the temptations that present themselves to his bodily senses, the Royal Preacher cautions him, that for all these things God *will bring him into judgment*. It follows from this denunciation, that

the duty of the young man, to cleanse his way, is both practicable and urgent. The weakness of that plea was shown, on which young men too often encourage themselves in sin, by persuading themselves, that, to walk as becometh the Gospel of Christ is scarcely possible, or at least hardly to be expected at their age. It was shown from the nature and intent of the Gospel dispensation, from the recorded examples of virtuous young men, and from the balance of advantages and disadvantages of that period of life, that there can be no foundation for imagining it to be, by any means, *impracticable* for him to cleanse his way.

This point being disposed of, the question naturally arises, *wherewithal* shall a young man cleanse his way? *What steps* shall he take to accomplish this? The answer is given in the text, “by *taking heed thereto according to thy word.*”

I. He must take heed thereto.

II. He must take heed thereto, according to God's word.

I. If there be any one age, at which more than another it is our duty to take heed to our ways, it is that of the young man. Left now to his own discretion, he is liable to be led away by vanity, to place a presumptuous confidence in his powers; he has not yet that experience, which will teach him how prone we are to error in the views of

things that present themselves. He is at a period of life when outward circumstances have not yet checked the sanguine and hasty conclusions, from which his judgment is apt to take its tone, and to form its decisions according to his desires. He has not met with those reverses and disappointments, which teach us the consequences of precipitate decisions, and the necessity of reflection before action. His passions too are strong, and he is more open to temptation.

Placed in a situation of such peril, if he will but listen, what advice can be given to him more important than that of the Royal Preacher, to *take heed* to his ways. That *without* the grace of God no efforts of his could avail, is not questioned; but unless he *himself take heed*, that grace will profit him nothing. Much rests with himself. He has, by the Divine mercy, the means in his power of working with that Holy Spirit, which only can truly enable us to cleanse our way, and he is required, at his peril, to turn the gifts of God to his everlasting benefit. We will, therefore, now endeavour to state some of those methods by which the young man may take heed to his way.

The first thing the young man has to do in taking heed to his ways, is, to come to a clear understanding as to *what* his ways really are. It may seem a strange assertion, that many are utterly ignorant upon this point, but such will be found to be very commonly the case. When we speak of a man's

ways in a religious point of view, we do not speak of his mere actions, only as they stand by themselves, without regard to their consequences, but of his thoughts, and words, and actions, as things connected with some results, as *pursuits*, as tending to some *end*. Now one great evil of the young man's situation is, that very often he has *in view* no way at all; though his conduct is tending to some *end*, he *neither contemplates*, nor even *sees* that end. He has no *point* to which he is *systematically*, or even *intentionally*, advancing, and to which his thoughts and actions are *knowingly directed*. Every bubble that presents itself he pursues; he turns sometimes to the right hand, and sometimes to the left; he never inquires whither the path he follows will *conduct* him; he never thinks of noticing which is the *right* path. His actions are determined by pleasure or caprice; instead of regarding them as the actions of a mortal, and awfully responsible being, he rejoices himself in the days of his youth, walks in the ways of his heart, and in the sight of his eyes, never considering, that for all this God will bring him into judgment. To him, we say, "*take heed to thy ways.*"

We say, that he knows nothing of his ways,—he does not see whither they tend; his ways are like those of an idiot; they have no end, they have no object which he *perceives*. For though they lead to a very awful end, that end is not contemplated by him; he regards it not; he has no thought either

of avoiding or of seeking it. We caution him, therefore, to *take heed* to his ways,—to *observe* the end of them,—to have an object in *view*,—to *know*, and to *consider well* the consequences of his doings.

Will it be said, we do take heed to our ways, we do consider them well, we do know the end of them? If it be so, you have reason to be *thankful*; only take good heed that you deceive not yourselves. For if you do really take heed to your ways, some such questions as these will very often, and very earnestly, occupy your serious meditations.

For what *purposes* did God send me into the world? For what does His Providence watch over, and preserve me? Why did he send His Blessed Son, to suffer death upon the cross? What doth God require of me? Whither am I day by day advancing? Am I to live here for ever? Am I to live elsewhere? Will any portions of my present conduct be connected with my future destiny? What are my ways, and to what do they tend?

These, and many other questions of the same description, will often occupy the mind of the young man, who turns a serious thought upon his life, and is desirous to *take heed* to his ways. And what will the answers to these questions set before him? They will set before him the *end* in which all his ways should terminate—*Salvation through Christ*. This is the *purpose* for which God gave you being; this is the *purpose* for which He still preserves

you ; this is the *purpose* for which he *sent His Blessed Son into the world, to suffer death upon the cross*. He requires you, by faith and holiness, by prayer and well-doing, to seek the accomplishment of this purpose. To the *conclusion* of all earthly things you are daily and hourly advancing. Your time here is short and uncertain. You are about to enter upon another life, which will endure to all *eternity*. Upon your faith and conduct here will depend the happiness or misery of that eternal life.

Your ways ! what are they ? Whither do they tend ? *That* question, it is not for me to answer. Ask yourselves ; ask your own hearts ; consult your own consciences. *What* are your ways, and whither do they tend ; if they be paths of pleasantness, are they ways of *peace* ? Do they tend to the great purpose set before you ? Do they tend to salvation ? *Take heed*—I repeat it—*Take heed* to your ways.

If you will but attend to the counsel of Solomon, and earnestly take heed to your ways, you will soon cause that caution, and those pursuits, which at first required some pain and labour, to become habitual and pleasant to you. You will be *interested* in the objects of your pursuit, and daily become better acquainted with their value. Such Solomon describes to be the result, and thus he presses his counsel upon our attention : “ Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and getteth understanding. For the merchandise of it is better than the

merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies, and all the things that thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her. Length of days is in her right hand, and in her left hand riches and honour. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her; and happy is the man that retaineth her¹."

To caution the young man on the one hand, and to encourage him on the other, to take heed to his ways, he may be presented,

1st, With the example and fate of the wicked, who do not take heed to their ways.

2d, With the approbation and countenance of his friends, and of all good men.

3dly, With assurances of the Word of God that this work is one which cannot fail, in which his labour cannot be "in vain in the Lord," and in which the Lord will be both his confidence and his guide.

1st, The examples of the wicked, whose crimes too often take their *rise* in that *thoughtless* disregard of their ways, to which we just now alluded. A young man without a fixed object in view is like a mariner without anchor, chart, or compass. He is driven before every blast of passion, and floats with every current of temptation. Can he expect to

¹ Prov. iii. 15, &c.

escape shipwreck of his soul? But he will not long continue the mere *passive* instrument of Satan; he will soon become his *active agent*. The continual, though thoughtless indulgence of sin pollutes the heart, "the imagination becomes defiled, the will enslaved, the affections entangled." Ruin and destruction are gaining dominion over him, according to that most true description given by St. James. "Lust, when it hath conceived, bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, *bringeth forth death*."

In this fatal state, the young man begins to take *heed* to his ways, he begins to have an *end* in view; an end which *engages*, which *enslaves*, which *destroys* him. He does, indeed, take *heed* to his ways, but his attention, his whole thoughts are bent *not* on *cleansing* his way, but on devising schemes to *defile* it. This becomes the perverse, the dreadful end, to which his reprobate heart gives up its affections, and his darkened mind turns its powers.

The power of conscience becomes gradually deadened by repeated shocks, the soul becomes more and more polluted; the Holy Spirit, grieved and despised, forsakes this violated and impure abode. Satan occupies the vacant dwelling; the wretched man, left to his own devices, works all "unclean-ness with *greediness*," delights in sin, longs for the opportunity of gratifying the lusts of the flesh, and in his very thoughts and desires are perpetually guilty of sin. Instead of taking heed to his ways, that they may tend to *peace* and *salvation*, his la-

hours, his thoughts, are all directed to discover the easiest methods of *silencing* the remonstrances of *conscience*, of *concealing* his *guilt* from *public observation*, of rejecting the exhortations of parents and friends, and avoiding the recollections of that God, who for these things will certainly bring him into judgment. Thus he takes *heed* to *his way*.

He “lays wait for his *own blood*, and lurks privily for his *own life*.” He now is no longer *neuter*; he *loves* darkness better than *light*. He presents an example of one of those whom St. Paul awfully describes as “vessels of wrath, *fitted* for destruction.” He warns every one of the necessity of taking *heed* to his ways, and habituating himself to contemplate the *end* of them, while there is time and opportunity to *cleanse* them, and render them ways of pleasantness, and paths of eternal peace.

The young man will also, in taking heed to his ways, be encouraged by the approbation and countenance of his parents and friends, and of all good men.

“A wise son,” says Solomon, “maketh a glad father.” While he is taking heed to his ways, and directing his steps towards the blessings of Heaven, he is procuring to himself honour and approbation here upon earth; he is obtaining from those, whose commendation he ought to desire, the encouragement of their favour and respect. Nothing can gladden the heart of a parent more than the conduct of a wise son; no spectacle can be so grateful

to a fond parent, as that of a young man laying the foundation of Christian excellence, and preparing to show forth, in his maturer years, the graces of the Gospel, and to secure, after his death, the prize of salvation. It is grateful not only to a *good*, but even to a *wicked* parent. He must, indeed, be very far plunged in guilt, and debased by crime, who could contemplate such a son without a feeling of satisfaction. Even the wicked see enough of the folly and peril of their ways, or at least have a sufficient perception of the uneasiness and mischief caused by vice, to wish that those about them may not be subject to its influence. However, here and there a *scoffer* may be found, or an envious evil-doer may *calumniate* and sneer, yet, generally, the young man, who takes heed to his ways, will command respect and affection. "Exalt *her*," says Solomon, speaking of heavenly wisdom, "exalt *her*, and she shall promote *thee*: she will bring thee to honour, when thou dost embrace her. She shall give to thine head an ornament of grace: a crown of glory shall she deliver to thee."

Lastly, in taking heed to his ways, the young man has the sure word of God that his labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.

Other pursuits may fail, and end in disappointment; but this cannot fail, as having *His* blessing, whose grace is sufficient for us, and who has promised to be with us to the end of the world. As with Joseph, whether in the prison, in the house of

Potiphar, or in the palace of Pharaoh, every thing he undertook was crowned with success; (for the Lord was with him, and made all that he did to prosper) so will it be with you. Take heed to your ways, have one great end in view, and the Lord will make all that you do ultimately to prosper. Whatsoever consequences may appear to result at this *present* time from your conduct, all will *finally* work together for your good: health or sickness, riches or poverty, prosperity or adversity, all will, under God, carry you forward to the great end you have in view. But an *end* you must have in view; you must take heed to your ways, if you would wish to preserve your innocence, to obtain the affections and respect of your friends, and, above all, to secure the favour and support of God. "My son," says Solomon, "let them not depart from thine eyes, keep sound wisdom and discretion; so shall they be life unto thy soul, and grace to thy neck. Then shalt thou walk in thy *way safely*, and thy foot shall not stumble. When thou liest down thou shalt not be afraid; yea, thou shalt lie down, and thy sleep shall be sweet. Be not afraid of sudden fear, neither of the desolation of the wicked, when it cometh; for the *Lord* shall be thy confidence, and shall keep thy foot from being taken."

The means by which you are to cleanse your ways, and preserve yourselves in the right way, will be the subject of a future discourse.

This exhortation I shall close with entreating

the earnest attention of young men to a subject in which they are so deeply interested; and with praying that they may be led, by God's grace, to take *heed* to their ways, to understand the *end* of their conduct, and to behave themselves so, that *God* may uphold their footsteps, and teach them to tread in those paths that lead unto life, through Christ Jesus.

SERMON XLI¹.

GOD'S WORD THE YOUNG MAN'S ONLY SAFE GUIDE.

THE PRAYER.

O ALMIGHTY GOD, who alone canst order the unruly wills and affections of sinful men ; Grant unto thy people, that they may love the thing which thou commandest, and desire that which thou dost promise ; that so, among the sundry and manifold changes of the world, our hearts may surely there be fixed, where true joys are to be found ; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

PSALM cxix. 9.

WHEREWITHAL SHALL A YOUNG MAN CLEANSE HIS WAY ? BY
TAKING HEED THERETO ACCORDING TO THY WORD.

WE have shown that the young man, to cleanse his way, must take heed, and must understand what his way is, and whither it tends. We might have

¹ This Sermon is almost a transcript of Eaton's Sermon on the text, excepting that I have dropped one of the heads into which he divides the subject as leading to another Sermon, which would be inconsistent with my present plan and limits.

suggested also some rules of conduct, which *human prudence* and *common sense* will show us are likely to assist him in cleansing his way, and in keeping him from the ways of sin. But it may be more desirable to confine ourselves to the line pointed out by our text, which directs us not only to *take heed*, but to take heed "*according to God's word.*" For after all, this is our best and only safe rule.

From this part of the admonition, it will be obvious, that it is not enough, to use mere cautionary measures, and prudential maxims of conduct, but that independently of those rules which his own prudence, or that of his friends, may offer, his efforts, to be effectual, must be *excited* by a desire of taking heed *according* to God's word ; must have for their *motive* a constant regard to God.

Solomon tells his son, "The fear of the Lord is the *beginning* of wisdom." It is unquestionably the foundation of all wisdom. It is *then* only that we begin to be truly wise, when we begin to know and to fear God. This principle of piety, this due regard for God, which causes us "to stand in awe, and sin not," is the first and grand principle of wisdom and goodness. There is no other which can have authority sufficient to give law to the human mind, and command obedience in *all* circumstances of trial and temptation. But this regard for God is that *faith that purifies the heart, and gives us the victory over the world.* Its nature and power may be seen in the virtuous reply of Joseph when

tempted to crime. “ *How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?*”

This principle of piety established in the soul preserves a sense of God as *always* present, and acquainted with our most *secret* thoughts, and a spectator of our most hidden actions, and not an *unconcerned* spectator, but of *purser eyes than to behold iniquity* with approbation, and prepared to judge all men according to their doings.

Entering, as the young man is, upon a world full of temptation and of evil example, headstrong as are his passions, corrupt as is his will, with what *motive* can he be presented, which shall be *always* at hand, and *always* active; *inciting* him to cleanse his way, and furnishing him with *power* to do it? What can be effectual to these purposes, but a steady principle of piety, a constant habit of referring all his thoughts, words, and works to God, and of considering Him as the person to whose glory they are offered, and who is the constant observer of their tendency?

The authority of man cannot reach nor restrain further, than the outward and open actions; it cannot take cognizance of the secret works of darkness, much less of the purposes, desires, and schemes of the heart. These, unless controlled in time, will become too powerful to be resisted, or restrained, by any terrors whatsoever.

A young man, therefore, may be corrupted before the authority of a parent or of a friend can inter-

pose. But the presence of *God* is *every* where: *He searches the heart and tries the reins of the children of men. There is no darkness, nor shadow of death, where the wicked may hide themselves.* And there is *no* authority, but that of God, which can extend its influence into all places, and cause its power to be felt at all times, to secure innocence of life, and purity of heart. But true piety has God ever before it; will restrain you from all appearance of evil, as well in *private* as in *public*. For as *darkness and light are both alike to God*, so are they alike to the godly man. Piety will teach us to act as never alone, as always under the view of that Being, who seeth all things.

But though human *authority* may be admitted to be thus insufficient, yet that presumption to which I referred in my last discourse as particularly strong in the mind of a young man, may induce him to imagine that his own powers are of themselves sufficient; that his reason and conscience is a guide abundantly capable of directing him how he ought to act; that his will, and private resolution, will supply him with ability and strength, without having such constant recourse to the aid of piety, or referring every thing to God. Let him but take heed to his way, he may think that is enough. If a young man *desire to perish*, through his own folly, these are the very opinions on which he might form his practice.

The king, who was celebrated for his wisdom,

evidently wished his son to follow a different plan. "My son," said he, "*trust in the LORD with all thine heart, and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him ; and He shall direct thy paths. Be not wise in thine own eyes ; fear the Lord, and depart from evil.*"

Much has been said by divines and moralists upon the *beauty* and excellence of virtue and holiness ; of its *fitness* to secure the approbation of our judgment, and the support of our inclinations. But however well this may sound in theory, it is too well known, that in practice it utterly fails to produce any motive of sufficient power to direct the young man. He must have an *authority* that will control the evil affections of a corrupt nature ; and an *authority always* in force, and *never* liable to be evaded. How little could be effected in the government of mankind without authority, all experience shows, and every where the laws of society, as far as they can reach, provide an authority. What would be the state of society, if no law, or authority, existed to overawe the evil doer. However men might occasionally do right when under no temptation to the contrary, yet the moment passion, interest, and temptation, began to solicit them, they would too often follow whithersoever these invited them. Indeed, when the affections and inclinations shall once be powerfully excited, and become headstrong towards evil, how little do the wisest reasons, the most prudent counsels, and the

most affectionate exhortations, avail without *authority* to restrain, and to enforce obedience.

Try the experiment where you will, in kingdoms, in armies, or in private families, respecting children and servants, and you will find, it is a due regard to authority, and not mere unarmed reason, that governs, and restrains, and determines. An authority that can punish disobedience, command submission, and an authority that can reward virtue, may conciliate love and obedience. He who would preserve his heart and his way clean, must learn to have God always before him, as the Judge of all the world, the punisher of those that despise Him, and the rewarder of those that love and seek Him.

This is a point on which it is necessary thus to have dwelt, as it is one of the highest importance. Would a young man cleanse his way, he must not only take *heed to his way*, exerting all the prudence of which he is naturally possessed, but he must also cherish and cultivate in his mind an early and constant regard for God; and the true spirit of piety must be the governing principle of his heart and life. Without this, his virtue and innocence will always be left defenceless, in a precarious and uncertain state, liable to be wrested from him by such temptations as often and easily beset him. If he have not the *fear of God before his eyes*, and the love of *God in his heart*, he will be as *Samson* was when he had *lost his strength—weak like other men*,

like those many young men who are daily seen ensnared and led captive by sin and folly. Whatsoever he doth, he must do it heartily *as unto the Lord*, knowing that without this principle no efforts or prudence can constitute a sufficient preservative.

Some, indeed, may urge that even with it there is no such preservative; they may urge that we have upon record frequent instances of persons illustrious for their piety and regard for God, who have been seduced into gross sins. This cannot be questioned. But the inference that a principle of piety, and of referring all things to God, is no safeguard, cannot be supported upon these melancholy facts. They prove the weakness, *not* of this principle of faith and piety, but of those who apply it. Could we look into such cases in all their bearings, and see them as He does, who knoweth the heart, we should probably find, that these men had, for the time, *given up* their principle of piety, and not that the principle of piety had failed them. And if this be the case, instead of showing the weakness of *true piety*, it shows its absolute necessity, and the weakness of our mortal nature, which without it cannot stand. Whereas true piety, which is the union of faith and love, is able to support the soul under all sufferings and temptations. Whenever it has been truly embraced and cherished, it has set men above all the terrors and allurements of the world, it has enabled them to perform those great achievements which St. Paul recites in the eleventh

chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews—"It has stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, out of weakness has made strong." Sustained and cheered by it, "some have been tortured, not accepting deliverance, others have endured trials of cruel mockings and scourgings, of bonds and imprisonments; have been destitute, afflicted, tormented." In one word, difficult as it is, yet *with God all things* are possible. When you are weak in yourselves, you are strong in the *Lord*, and in the power of his might. His grace is sufficient for you, and His strength will be made perfect in weakness.

My younger brethren, though I have taken some time in urging this single point, which perhaps you may have thought too plain to require so many arguments in proof of it, yet let me request your patient attention to the few words of exhortation which I have to address to you upon the truths we have been supporting.

In the former discourse, I laid before you *maxims* of conduct, which especially depended upon the exercise of your own powers and judgment, and exhibited them to you as specimens of other precautions which your own prudence might suggest.

In this I have endeavoured to recommend to you that *principle* which alone can give *life* and *efficacy* to all your efforts, and without which all your powers will be found weakness, all your purposes *unstable as water*, and *mutable as the will*, tem-

per, and passions, of man. It is no trifling point, which I have been recommending to you; no, it is your life—the life of your *souls* depends upon it, the security of your integrity, the maintenance of your character, your ease, your honour, your happiness, both for time and for eternity.

You have now entered upon life under your own conduct and guidance; heretofore your *parents* and friends have, or ought to have, taken heed to your way; but *now* you must take heed for yourselves. They cannot, indeed, be unconcerned for you; rather their concern is increased. Nor ought their authority to be absolutely shaken off, or their counsels despised. But *you* are not *willing* that they should, nor are they able to attend to you, and care for you, as in your former infant and youthful state. You must and *will* take heed for yourselves; the time is arrived for which you have probably long been wishing.

But what! will you, dare you, go forth, and rush into this world of snares, of sins, and follies, without *any* guide and director, without *any* authority over you? If you do, it must be a wonder indeed, the greatest of wonders, that you escape sin and folly.

It is an awful scene for a young man to leave his father's house, and go forth into a strange and untried world. But how much more affecting would it be to the young man, did he but know and consider what a trust, what an awful trust, has de-

volved upon him, in being left *to take heed to his own ways*.

To such, to all such young persons, God speaks in the solemn and affectionate language of the prophet: "Wilt thou not from this time cry unto *me*, my father, thou art the guide of my youth?" God is willing to be so, the father of the fatherless, the guide of the young: draw nigh to Him, and He will draw nigh to you. When father or mother forsake you, or you leave them, God will take you up, to be a father to you, and you shall be unto Him for sons and for daughters.

It has been observed already, that *authority* is requisite for the preservation of *all* order and virtue; and if the authority of God do not succeed, and take place in your minds, in proportion as the authority of your earthly parents is diminished, or relinquished, you are *deserted*, you are left to yourselves in a state the most forlorn, miserable, and perilous. *Wilt thou not, therefore, cry unto God, My Father, thou art the guide of my youth?* Without this all your parents' hopes are defeated, their instructions vain, their labour lost. Without this, all your own efforts will be both vain, and all your best actions not only of no avail, but even partaking of the nature of sin, as springing from a motive, which has no reference to religion and faith.

Be prevailed upon, therefore, to choose God for your God, for the "guide of your youth," and the guardian of your life. Henceforth "sanctify the

Lord God in your *hearts* ;” “ let His fear be before your eyes *continually* ;” learn *habitually* to stand in awe of God, and “ sin not ;” let Him be the object of your frequent and serious thoughts both by night and by day, when you lie down and when you rise up, when you go out and when you come in ; at home and abroad, in private and in public, learn and *accustom* yourselves to pray to Him, and praise Him ; to refer all your actions, words, and thoughts, to *His* approbation and *His* glory ; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.

We may conclude this address with the words of David, to the grandeur and propriety of which nothing can be added, but the consideration of the time and circumstances of their delivery. They are addressed to his own son, in the presence of all his princes and people assembled on purpose to receive his last benediction and advice, under the prospect of his approaching death. In this august assembly the aged and infirm king stands up, and having first exhorted his people, turns to his son, and thus counsels him :

“ And thou, Solomon, my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve Him with a perfect heart, and with a willing mind ; for the Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts. If thou seek Him, He will be found of thee ; but if thou forsake Him, He will cast thee off for ever.”

SÈRMON XLII.

CAUTIONS AND DUTIES OF THE MIDDLE AGED.

THE PRAYER.

O God, who knowest us to be set in the midst of so many and great dangers, that by reason of the frailty of our nature we cannot always stand upright; Grant to us such strength and protection, as may support us in all dangers, and carry us through all temptations; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

MATT. xiii. 22.

HE ALSO, THAT RECEIVED SEED AMONG THORNS, IS HE THAT HEARETH THE WORD: AND THE CARE OF THIS WORLD, AND THE DECEITFULNESS OF RICHES, CHOKE THE WORD, AND IT BECOMETH UNFRUITFUL.

WE have shown the necessity of a young man's taking heed to his ways, the motives by which he should be actuated to do so, and the rule which he is to take for his direction; in passing on to the duties of the middle age, I can have nothing to add on these points. The only principle on which the

middle aged man can rely, as furnishing him with a proper motive, and sufficient authority to influence him at all times, and under all circumstances, is a principle of faith and piety. And the only rule to which he can safely and infallibly refer in all cases, is to the Word of God. The application of that rule to the endless variety and combinations of events and duties, which it cannot enumerate, must be left to reason and conscience. The distinction, then, between the duties of the young man, and those of the middle aged, and of the old, consists, not in either being actuated by different *principles* of action, or having a different *rule* for their direction, but solely in the *objects* to which chiefly, at each age, they are called upon to *apply* this principle and this rule. The young man, the middle aged man, and the old man, have to contend with many temptations, which are *common* to all these periods of life; and they have also respectively to watch those temptations, which, though not *always*, yet are *generally* more *prevalent* at each of these several seasons. This claims in each a more than common share of attention to certain vices, and certain virtues, which should then be respectively discouraged, or cultivated. Of these I shall now proceed to offer you some examples, as relating to the middle aged; that is to say, to individuals between the ages of thirty and sixty, or thereabout. And we may select, as a general description of what too often is found to prevail in the middle age, that

state of heart and conduct, which our Saviour explains to have been represented by the seed springing up among thorns, "the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful."

Many a man has begun well, and when young has learned to govern the impetuous lust and passions of youth; yet when he goes forth amidst the cares of the world, he suffers the seeds to be overgrown, and choked. He is assailed by another kind of temptation; and he who was alert and proof against the violent and direct impulses of passion, is silently betrayed, and overrun by the less perceptible but not less fatal encroachment of worldly care. And though this may happen at one age as well as at another, yet it is an event to which the circumstances of a middle aged man give a more than ordinary degree of probability, and which at that season requires peculiar vigilance. This will be seen as we consider some of those temptations and cares, and passions to which the middle age is in an especial degree exposed.

It is by no means the least uncommon mode by which Satan makes his approaches, and finally subdues the heart under his dominion, that he causes us to deceive ourselves, and betray our greatest interests, by giving to sin the semblance of virtue and duty. Thus, a man who is profuse, persuades himself that he is generous; he that is mean and uncharitable, persuades himself that he is frugal and

cautious ; he that is severe, professes to be strictly just. And so with many other truly anti-christian dispositions, the self-deceived sinner deludes himself by denominating them those virtues to which they bear a resemblance, and attempts to justify them under pretence of certain duties, which *seem* to require them. Some cases in which this is liable to happen to the middle aged man, I shall now consider.

1. For instance, he becomes perhaps the parent of a family, and knows that both natural affection, reason, and Scripture, require that he should provide for his family : so far all is well. But in his anxiety for this, he too often runs into a fatal extreme ; his whole soul becomes bound down to this pursuit, and to those temporal objects, which are the means of accomplishing it. He forgets that reliance upon God, that sense of Christian duty, and of the secondary nature of all the things of the world¹, which alone can sanctify and prosper his efforts. He forgets those mightier interests, which are pre-eminently to be the objects of his care and labour, and which constitute the one thing needful. He forgets the peril into which the inordinate pursuit of the things of this world will bring his immortal soul, and his whole heart is intent upon the acquirement of riches, and daily becoming more enslaved to them². At the same time he, in fatal

¹ Comp. Matt. vi. 30. 33. with 1 Pet. v. 6, 7.

² Comp. text with Luke xxi. 34.

delusion, silences the voice of conscience, and fondly believes he is fulfilling that law of nature, and obeying that command of God, which calls upon him to provide things needful for those of his own household¹. He receives the “seed among *thorns* ;” he “heareth the word ; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.” His very prayers often become an abomination ; he offers up to God petitions for what he ought not to ask, and what he cannot ask without sin ; he prays for the fulfilment of desires, which are sinful and dangerous.

This is one channel of temptation, which the middle-aged man ought to be particularly vigilant to stop. If he shall not attend to it, it will be, as is said of the beginning of strife, “as when one letteth out water :” the aperture will be trifling at first ; but where the damage will end, no man can tell. How then is he to prevent, or remedy it ? By carefully observing the directions of his only safe counsellor—the Word of God ; by taking it wholly, and not partially ; by considering not merely that part which may appear to favour his present views and inclinations, but also those which may thwart his eager desires, and will direct him to eternal happiness.

What will he find in those sacred pages, if he faithfully consults them ? He will indeed find, that

¹ See Sermon V.

it is his duty to provide for those of his own household, and that he who neglects this duty "is worse than an infidel." But he will also find, that he is to do this in a full reliance on God's providence, in subservience to the still greater duty of seeking his salvation, and also in such a manner, as may not render the riches, which he seeks, hard and destructive masters, instead of valuable and useful servants.

Thus the same Word of God, which teaches him that he is to use all the means, which prudence may suggest, and diligence promote, for providing for himself, and those dependent on him, teaches also, that he must not be *over-anxious* about those things, must not suffer them to occupy his whole soul; reminds him of the fowls of the air, which neither sow nor reap, nor gather into barns, and yet God feedeth them; of the lilies of the field, which neither toil nor spin, yet God clotheth them in more beauteous vesture, than the robes of Solomon in all his glory. It bids him, therefore, proceed with a due reliance on that gracious God, which feedeth the fowls of the air, and clothes the lilies of the field, to take no thought, not to be over-anxious, about what he shall eat, or what he shall drink, or wherewithal he shall be clothed. It teaches him to cast all his care upon God, for he careth for us. It teaches him to set his *affections* on things above, and not on things on the earth; that where his treasure is, there his heart may be also. It teaches

him to hold all earthly things as secondary and inferior, and to enter upon all his undertakings, and regulate all his desires, with that reliance upon God's providence, and that submission to His will, which alone can cause them to be free from sin, or to turn to his lasting profit.

And with respect to that pursuit, which ought to be the grand object of his care, the same Scriptures teach him to seek *first* the kingdom of God and his righteousness, to make the promises of the Gospel, the hope that is in Christ Jesus, the prime motives of his conduct. And the same Scriptures, both by precept and example, warn him of the peril in which he places this hope, by suffering the riches and cares of the world to occupy the first place in his thoughts and affections; they declare, that these things overrun and choke the good seed, and gain entire possession of the heart, and lull it into a fatal slumber and oblivion of its most important interests. "Take heed," saith Jesus, "take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and the *cares* of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares." He represents also, in the parable of the guests invited to the supper, the *manner* in which these cares keep men away; He represents their agency in the frivolous and offensive excuses, that they have bought land, and must go and see it; or oxen, and must go and prove them; must let their traffic and their gain stand in the way of *their Lord's invitation*. St,

Paul complains that Demas has forsaken him, being *seduced by the love of the world* : and the Evangelists have left on record the awful example of Judas selling himself to Satan for lucre, and betraying even his own Master and Saviour. These, and many other instructive cautions and examples, will be found in Holy Writ ; and it behoves the middle aged man, beset with the cares of the world, and with a tendency to fancy it his duty to yield himself to the pursuit of gain, it behoves him *frequently* to study these Scriptures, and apply them to his profit.

The same self-delusions which led him to justify himself in the inordinate desire of riches, would also incline him to apply the same false reasoning with respect to the honours of the state. Ambition is generally a powerful passion in the middle aged. It may be contended, that these honours will enable a man to provide for himself, or for his friends and family, and that they are in themselves distinctions which may be lawfully desired. So they certainly may be, but not suffered to engross the whole soul ; their real character must not be forgotten. They must be viewed, according to the scriptural account of them, as vain and fleeting, and connected only with a transitory state of things. They must neither be violently coveted, nor when possessed must they engender pride and self-sufficiency.

The Gospel will not, in *any situation*, dispense with that Christian humility, which calls upon " him

that is greatest among you to be as the younger ; and him that is chief, as he that doth serve." And a better reason for which these honours should neither be coveted, nor puff up their possessor, cannot be given to the ambitious, than that which is declared in the solemn and impressive language of St. Peter, that the "glory of man is as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away ; but the word of the Lord endureth for ever." The want of a proper sense of the relative value of these, and their placing earthly honour too high in the scale, caused the chief rulers and Pharisees to rush blindly on their destruction. We are told, they would not confess Jesus, "because they loved the praise of men *more* than the praise of God."

In these observations it is not intended to decry those motives to exertion, which the above objects present, but only to place them on their proper level, and confine them within their proper limits.

Only amidst the pressure of human claims, let the man be on his guard, lest he lose sight of his *main point* ; lest he forget the great interests of religion, and lest, amidst the competition, the ingratitude, the disappointments, the jealousies, the injustice, which will cross his path, he may overwhelm in the press the pure and meek graces of the Gospel, and sacrifice at the shrine of worldly care, or worldly praise, charity, humility, love of man, and love of God. Let him beware, lest, in

fixing his hopes too much on present objects of desire, he destroy the foundations of that hope, which is to afford comfort in his declining years, to illumine the approach to the grave, and shed unfading glories over the prospect of the resurrection.

The means, by which the middle aged man must guard against the deceitfulness of worldly care, comprise all the duties of religion; and none but himself can enter upon the various forms of applying those means, which his peculiar situation, propensities, and mode of life, may require, to overcome the temptations that assail him.

I shall mention, in this reference to the period of life now under consideration, only those general duties and precautions which concern every Christian—self-examination, private and family prayer, and a constant and scrupulous attendance upon the public ordinances of religion. Of the first three, the times and the seasons are left to the discretion and conscience of each individual; only I would intreat you to let them be practised as frequently and as earnestly as possible. Let them not be neglected upon any pretence of business, or any solicitations of pleasure. Forget not the admonition of the preacher of wisdom, that there is a time for every thing, a time for amusement, and a time for reflection; a time for business, and a time for prayer; a time for man, and a time for God. On no account presume to deny the concerns of your

soul their due portion ; frequently examine the state of your heart and affections, and regularly begin and end the business of the day with prayer for God's grace and blessing on your pursuits, and for His forgiveness of your sins. Watch and pray ; for unless you do both, the thorns will assuredly spring up, and choke the good seed, and it will produce no fruit in the day of the Lord of the harvest.

Of the last of the means just referred to, the public ordinances of religion, it may be remarked, that the seasons for the observance of them are generally *determined* by the Word of God, or by ecclesiastical authority. All that you have to do is to *attend* to them, not to yield, upon *scarcely any necessity*, still less upon slight pleas, to those pursuits, which would seduce you to neglect them. They, and especially the Sabbath, and the Lord's Supper, present periodical and fixed occasions, in which you may interrupt the fascinations, the cares, and bustle of life ; calm your soul down to listen to the more tranquillizing voice of religion, examine the tendency of your ways, commune with your God ; seek strength from the Holy Spirit of grace, and call to mind that great and glorious purpose, for which your Redeemer's precious blood was shed, and his spotless body offered upon the cross. These, and other topics of high and awful import, are brought before you at the above stated periods, and offer a favourable interruption to the clamour of

worldly cares. They interpose those considerations which alone can check the rank luxuriancy of earthly pursuits and desires, and prevent the good seed from being overgrown and choked.

Neglect them not, my brethren ; beware of the deceitfulness of riches. The lessons of experience are recorded against them, the voice of inspiration denounces them. " Love not," says St. John, " the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father but of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lusts thereof, but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." Labour not then to be rich ; give not your whole heart to the cares of this life. Let not that period of your life, which combines maturity of judgment with full powers of intellect and of strength ; which is so peculiarly adapted alike for reflection and for action ; let not that period be wholly spent in labours, which the royal preacher again and again proclaims are but vanity, have neither certainty in the attainment of their object, nor permanency in their results. Be *prudent* and diligent in your worldly callings ; but remember, at the same time, the inferior and secondary nature of these ; let them not absorb all your faculties ; let them be followed in subserviency to that labour which alone cannot be vain. Remember you are Christians, that you

have immortal souls to be saved; bless that gracious Being who hath furnished you with the means, and assurance, of crowning your labours with certain success. In that assurance work with him steadily, cheerfully, and gratefully. Such is the spirit, and such the advice of St. Paul, in whose animating words I state the same, for your admonition and encouragement: "Thanks be to God which giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ. *Therefore*, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; forasmuch, as ye *know*, that your labour is not in vain, in the Lord."

SERMON XLIII.

CAUTIONS AND DUTIES OF OLD AGE.

THE PRAYER.

GRANT, O Lord, that as we are baptized into the death of thy blessed Son our Saviour Jesus Christ; so by continual mortifying our corrupt affections, we may be buried with him; and that through the grave and gate of death, we may pass to our joyful resurrection, for his merits who died and was buried, and rose again for us, thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

PROV. xvi. 31.

THE HOARY HEAD IS A CROWN OF GLORY IF IT BE FOUND IN THE
WAY OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.

WE now come to the consideration of the last stage of human life—old age, and even there we shall find that the Christian soldier has still the good fight to fight, and no where in this world can he be said to have entered “into his rest.” The hoary head is indeed said to be “a crown of glory;” but not unless it be “found in the way of righteousness.”

The suggestions which I have to offer upon this point, may be classed under the following heads.

I. First, those deviations from virtue, to which the old are peculiarly subject.

II. Those virtues and that conduct which are especially becoming and required at that period of life.

When the aged man is found in the state described in the text, what can be more honourable and venerable? An aged man experienced in the ways of righteousness, cleaving to his God, and gradually advancing through the vale of years to that gate which will receive him to his reward, and through which he must pass to be crowned with glory in the presence of his Heavenly Father, is a spectacle which ought to be regarded by every one with the utmost respect and affection. His knowledge, his experience, his situation—on the verge of eternity—showing forth the long continued grace and mercies of his God—all are calculated to inspire every rightly thinking mind with sentiments of reverence, and with a desire to demonstrate those sentiments by proper outward tokens of deference.

The propriety and justice of so doing was recognized among the more civilized nations of the heathen world, and the Scriptures distinctly recognize the same principle. “Thou shalt rise up,” said the inspired lawgiver of the Israelites, “thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man ¹.”

¹ Levit. xix. 32.

But, on the other hand, a more painful, and were it not awful, a more contemptible sight cannot be exhibited, than age, when it is *not* found in the way of righteousness. What can be more terrible, not to say disgusting, than an old man, older in sin than even in years, inveterate in habits of wickedness, unreformed by experience, not called off by infirmities, deliriously walking on in vice, not sobered by the grave yawning beneath his faltering footsteps, or by the prospects of eternity and judgment rising rapidly in his almost terminated path. *He*, then, that would claim for his hoary head the crown of glory; he that would be revered by man, or beloved of God, he must be “found in the way of righteousness.”

With respect and deference, then, to the maturer judgment of my elder brethren, I shall proceed in the course of my ministerial office, and more as one whose duty it is to put *them in mind*, than as one who would presume to *teach* them. Thus I shall proceed to lay before them some vices to which age is admitted to be more peculiarly tempted; and some habits and virtues, which peculiarly become that period of life, and without which the hoary head will be robbed of “its crown of glory,” both in time and in eternity.

1. We may observe, that aged persons should be on their guard against proneness to suspicion, and hardness of heart. They have witnessed much

of the treachery and imposture of mankind, and, frequently disgusted and grieved, they acquire habits of distrust, and excessive caution. These causes, operating with the decline of the warmth of the affections, which decline for wise purposes, seem to follow some general law of nature, tend to encourage a proneness to suspicion, and to harden the heart. Their sympathy in the sufferings of others is in danger of being affected by that state of their affections, and by their experience of the wickedness and corruptions of the world; and they are cautioned, therefore, to be on their guard against the encroachments of selfishness, and the failure of charity in their breasts. However just the views, which they take of human character, may be, and however many may be the *real* causes of distrust, which the world may present to them, still they must not lose sight of the energy and long-suffering of that Christian grace of *charity*, which "*never faileth.*" They must bear in mind that they themselves are of that frail and fallen race, which they so much condemn, and themselves stand in need of that indulgence and forgiveness, which they are to extend to others. They should remember also, that the infirmities of age frequently destroy that elasticity of spirit, which preserves good humour and cheerfulness; and that there is a tendency to peevish and querulous opinions, which they should watch, lest it cause them to *exaggerate* the actual depravity of mankind, and incline to dis-

trust those about them more than the real state of the case can justify.

Not unconnected with this feeling is a propensity which has been remarked, amongst aged persons, to take a dislike to those whom *the law*, or *natural relationship*, points out as their proper heirs. It happens, not unfrequently, that in the disposal of their effects, this prepossession causes them to leave the world with an *act of great injustice* to those persons. Suspicious, and jealous, they are ready to take umbrage at any supposed neglect of their successors. They often attribute even their attentions to a wrong motive, and think that they have no other view than securing the inheritance. Nor are there wanting those who will take advantage of this propensity, wretches that will creep around the aged, flatter their foibles, render themselves necessary by compliances and officiousness, and then excite or foster the prejudices which the aged is sometimes too ready to admit against his heir; misrepresent the best intentions of the latter, and aggravate those actions which may have given real cause of offence. Against this bias, and these mercenary tempters it is the duty of the aged to be vigilant. They are responsible to *God*, and God will bring them to judgment for whatever *injustice* they may cause to be done by the testamentary disposal of their property; for all the strife, all the heart-burnings, all the malice, and all the decay of Christian charity, which they may occasion, as well

as for the positive wrong done to the person, whom the voice of nature, or the institutions of the community point out as the proper individual on whom the inheritance should devolve. It is an injury of no trifling consequence, and he who rashly inflicts it, will assuredly find it classed among those things of which he will be required to give an account before that tribunal where all our actions and all our motives will be seen in the true light, and be recompensed as they deserve. I would confirm my own observations on this point with the sentiments of an excellent Prelate¹ of our Church. "This," says he, speaking on the point in question, "is very hard and wrong; that a groundless dislike, or a trifling offence, or even very great offence, should change a reasonable disposition of things; above all, when expectations have been given, and the world made acquainted with them, and steps in life taken in consequence of them. Whatever right they may plead to do as they will with their own, they are not at liberty to act thus; but ought to look on the proper disposal of their fortunes as a matter of *conscience*; and take into serious consideration every circumstance that should naturally have weight in the case. Nearness of relation is a ground of preference, which should never be disregarded without the strongest motives to the contrary; motives which not only *we ourselves think* sufficient, but

¹ Archbishop Secker.

other good and wise persons, uninterested in the case, allow to be such. Further claims, never to be overlooked when we have ability for taking notice of them, are, kindnesses formerly received, promises given, length and faithfulness of service or attendance, merit, want. And all these demands the uncertainty of life admonishes every one to provide for paying as soon as he can ; but the certain approach of death requires the old not to postpone it a single day. And performing this duty, as they ought, is one valuable instance of righteousness, which will give them comfort in their own breasts, procure them regard (so far as it is known) whilst they live, and do them lasting honour when they die."

The last of these vices which we may notice, as peculiarly requiring the attention of the aged, is avarice. It is a common remark, that a fondness for money, and a desire to hoard it without making it useful to themselves or others, frequently take possession of the heart, and burn with remarkable ardour when other passions and affections have become chilled, and almost extinguished. The elegant and acute writer¹, whose sentiments I have often had occasion to use in the compilation of these Sermons, on the several ages of human life, conceives that the prevalence of avarice in old age " can naturally be deduced from the sense of its

¹ Blair.

feebleness and decay. In proportion as the vigour both of body and mind declines, timidity may be expected to increase; with anxious and fearful eye the aged look forward to the evils which threaten them, and to the changes which may befall them. Hence, they are sometimes apt to over-value riches, as the instrument of their defence against these dangers, and as the most certain means of securing them against solitude and disrespect." Even in this they may often be disappointed. But independently of any considerations of this kind, there is a point of far greater importance, namely, the light in which it will cause them to appear in the eyes of that great Judge of all, before whom, in the course of nature, they must be finally prepared to render up an account of their doings. They must not lose sight of this, while their trembling footsteps are upon the brink of the grave, and while the grave is the gate through which they must rise to judgment, they must look upon this propensity to avarice as one of their *trials*, one of those *invitations* to *sin*, presented by their corrupt nature, which they are bound to resist. They must remember, that to the old, as well as the young, the Gospel declares, "covetousness is as idolatry;" and that ye cannot "serve God and mammon."

In speaking of their vices, let it not be supposed that I judge them to be the vices of every aged person, or that they never take place at other periods of life; it is only meant that they are points,

in which, *more* than in others, the aged have been observed to display their weakness, and the varied power of their *wily and spiritual foe*. Many an aged man rises superior to the weakness alluded to, and displays the crown of glory. And let us now point out a few particulars, in which the aged should excel, and to which the circumstances of their time of life are peculiarly favourable, and in a more than ordinary degree required.

In doing this, as all points cannot be handled, and some selection is necessary, I cannot take a better class of examples than those which St. Paul thought worthy of particular mention to Titus, in his instructions respecting the several heads of exhortation, on which *he wds to enlarge*. "But speak thou," said he, "the things which become sound doctrine, that the aged men be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience."

1st. Sober, temperate, grave. On temperance I need not expatiate: there is such a glaring inconsistency with old age, in intemperance, that no arguments or descriptions can convey to the mind any additional disgust, beyond what it creates at first sight. A drunken, or a debauched old man, is a sight at which even the sense of the most thoughtless revolts; the very children mock him, the wicked themselves despise him, the good pity and shudder for him. He that cannot refrain from intemperance, even on the verge of the grave, when the passions have become chilled, when the powers

of the body have worn themselves out—he must, indeed, be debased, he must be *devoted* to sin, and *enslaved* to Satan ; his is, indeed, an awful situation. But it is not mere freedom from intemperance which becomes the aged, he ought to be sober and grave. There is that which is due to the dignity of his grey hairs, which should lead him to preserve a consistency of character ; there are circumstances in his season of life peculiarly favourable to seriousness ; there are opportunities, from his incapability of bodily exertion, very inviting to the exercise of his reflection.

When the grave is close at hand ; when infirmities, when pain, when feebleness of spirit, are sent, as harbingers of approaching dissolution, to forewarn the soul, that its frail tenement, this earthly tabernacle, hasteth to decay ; what can tempt the aged man to levity, to pursue the frivolity and dissipation of the world, to imitate the manners, and even the follies, of youth ? What, but that wretched vanity, which our corrupt heart fosters, which appears in numberless forms, but in none more common than in a desire to appear any thing but what we really are. Surely other, and more serious reflections, ought to occupy the heart of the aged ; and for reflection he has abundant opportunities. He has, from his infirmities, many hours upon his hands, which he cannot employ in bodily exercise or in amusement of any kind. What a scope do these afford for study and reflection ; and, in such

circumstances, what an endless source of profitable and dignified employment may he derive from reading and meditation. But for this he must have fitted himself in earlier life; he must have laid the foundation in youth, or at least in manhood. He who would either preserve the dignity, or alleviate the unavoidable infirmities of age, he must be sober, temperate, and grave. Of such a character we have an example in the aged Barzillai, who, in return for the favour he had formerly done unto David, and for his steady loyalty, was invited by that king to accompany and partake of all the favours and the festivities of the court. How dignified was his reply, and how consistent with his age! With what reverence it appears to have impressed the king, who kissed him, and blessed him. He, instead of aping the follies of youth, or desiring the splendour and gaieties of the palace, he remembers that he is now *fourscore years* old; he respectfully reminds the king, that his infirmities will not suit the pleasures which are offered, and desires only to spend the remainder of his days in tranquillity and repose, looking for the day in which he may be allowed to "die in his own city, and be buried by the grave of his father and his mother."

The aged man is to be exhorted to be sound in faith, charity, and patience. Of these the two latter will tend greatly to smooth the passage of his declining age. Charity will subdue all those unholy and troublesome dispositions, which both cause us

to injure others, and at the same time to destroy our own repose. Patience will enable him to wait all the days of his appointed time, in humble submission to the diyine wisdom, and to bear the infirmities and afflictions, inseparable from his state, with resignation, calmness, and dignity. His faith will furnish him with materials for high and holy meditations; will show him the ways of his God; the mercies and the merits of his Redeemer. It will wean him from all attachment to this world; it will cause him to set his affections upon those things, which alone can dignify and support the aged, which truly render the hoary head a *crown of glory*. It will enable him to approach the grave with Christian hope, and Christian joy; instead of clinging with a vain and degrading attachment to the things of this life, he will be anxious only for the next. He will to the last persevere in well-doing, longing for the time of his departure; when, full of faith and hope, meditating upon the goodness and the truth of God; well grounded in the knowledge, and intent upon the promises, of His Word, he may, like the aged Simeon, exclaim, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace according to thy word; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation."

SERMON XLIV.

FEMALE CHARACTER¹.

THE PRAYER.

O God, forasmuch as without thee we are not able to please thee; Mercifully grant, that thy Holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule our hearts, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

1 PET. iii. 5.

AFTER THIS MANNER, IN THE OLD TIME, THE HOLY WOMEN ALSO,
WHO TRUSTED IN GOD, ADORNED THEMSELVES.

ST. PETER, in this chapter, alludes to the important effects which females, when directed by discretion, and furnished with scriptural knowledge and principles, may produce upon society. He speaks first of the influence they may have over those who

¹ This Sermon, with the exception of the text, and a few introductory and concluding remarks, is Bishop Horne's. My reasons for changing the text and introduction are, that the Bishop's text had not a sufficiently direct reference to *female* character; and his introduction relates to a charity, which was the occasion of the delivery of the Sermon, and not applicable to a general view of the subject.—I. E. N. M.

“obey not the word,” in winning them over to the way of life, and to obedience to the yoke of the Gospel. And he then directs their attention to the beauty and grace of the female character, when properly formed; teaching them, that it sheds around them attractions, with which no personal charms, or ornaments, can vie; and which are not only engaging to man, but precious in the sight of God. He exhorts them not to let their adorning be “that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves¹.”

Nor can we fail to see that the Apostle has made no more than a just estimate of the importance of forming the female character, and recommended to them such knowledge as will enable them to have their full influence on society, and to give the largest range to that usefulness, which they are fitted by their Creator to confer upon both families and the community. The following remarks upon this subject, by Bishop Horne, may be serviceable in directing the efforts of those who can promote female education, and especially of females them-

¹ 1 Pet. iii. 3—5.

selves, to some points, in which their usefulness may be extended, by the assistance and counsels of the former, and by the study, diligence, and zeal of the latter. The Bishop divides his subject into two general heads: the first treats of the importance of forming female character by education; and, in the second, he proceeds to exhibit a picture of that character when so formed.

“ I. No pains or expense are spared in teaching *man* knowledge. Not so, in teaching it to woman. But why? Are women incapable of it? By no means. There have been instances to the contrary in every age: there are many shining ones in the present. They are what they are by education. If ignorant, it is through want of instruction, not of capacity.

“ It may, perhaps, be said, that they are of that sex usually styled and allowed to be the *weaker* sex. So much the more necessity is there, then, for their being strengthened and fortified by sound precepts well inculcated, and good examples set before them.

“ But do not women that are become learned, make themselves ridiculous? Perhaps they may sometimes, for want of being taught the most useful part of learning, which is *discretion*. But though some do this, others do it not. They know how to manage their learning, when they have got it; and possess it, as if they possessed it not.

“ Women, however, are not designed to govern the state, or to command armies; to plead in Westminster Hall, or to preach in the church; and therefore need not study the sciences leading to those several professions. But there are employments suited to them, and to which they ought to be suited; and no small degree of knowledge is required to suit them. The knowledge that is necessary for men, may not be necessary for them; but they are not, for that reason, to be left in ignorance.

“ A young woman that is ignorant will be idle, because she knows not what to do; if she is idle, she will soon be miserable; because, throughout the world, from the highest to the lowest, happiness consists in employment; if she is miserable, she will seek to relieve her misery by wandering abroad, running after shows and diversions. When she is arrived thus far, she may soon go farther; she may become vicious herself, and then most probably will spend the rest of her life in making others so that have the misfortune to fall in her way. And how many these may be, who can say? The bad education of women doth generally even more mischief than that of men; since the vices of men often proceed either from the ill education they received at first from their mothers, or else from the passions which other women inspire into them at a riper age.

“ Female influence always has been, and always must be, very great in the world; and therefore it

is in the power of a well educated woman, whatever be her station, to do much good in it.

“ How valuable to a family is a prudent and faithful *servant* of this sex, and of what vast importance to the temporal interests of a master or mistress has such an one proved !—sometimes to interests of a higher nature. Curious, to this purpose, is the story told in the fifth chapter of the second book of Kings. The Syrians had invaded the land of Israel, and, among other prisoners, had brought away captive a *little maid*, and she waited on the wife of Naaman, the king of Syria’s general, a man of high renown, and in great favour at court, but afflicted with a terrible and loathsome disease, the leprosy, incurable by human means. This servant, who had been educated in the true religion, and therefore knew the power of the God of Israel, and the miracles wrought by the hands of his prophets, grieving at the unhappy condition of her new master, expressed her wishes to her mistress that he would apply for help to Elisha. ‘ Would God,’ said she, ‘ my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria; for he would recover him of his leprosy.’ The words were so remarkable, that presently ‘ one went in, and told his lord, saying, Thus and thus said the maid, that is of the land of Israel.’ The consequence was, that the general took a journey to the prophet, and was not only cured of his leprosy, but became a convert to the true religion, and worshipped the God of Elisha. And how often have

persons in the highest stations been excited to good, or restrained from evil, at the instance or by the example of an inferior in the train of their own servants, who had been taught in early youth, what *they* perhaps had never learned, or, in the hour of passion, had forgotten !

“ The importance of female education will rise in our opinion, if we consider women as persons who may become *wives*, and *mistresses* of families. In this situation, they have duties to perform which lie at the very foundation of human life ; the support or the ruin of families depends upon their conduct. They have the direction of household affairs ; they, consequently, determine the greatest concerns of mankind, and form the good or evil manners of almost all the world. A judicious woman, that is diligent and religious, is the very soul of a house ; she gives orders for the good things of this life, and for those too of eternity. Men themselves, who have all the authority in public, cannot yet by their deliberations establish any effectual good, without the concurring assistance of women to carry them into execution. Besides their authority and their continual attendance in their houses, they have the advantage of being by nature careful, attentive to particulars, industrious, insinuating, and persuasive. And how can the men hope for any content in life, if their strictest friendship and alliance, which is that of marriage, be turned into disappointment and bitterness ?

“ But a matter of more weight is still behind. As *mothers*, women have, for some time, and that the most critical time too, the care of the education of their children of both sorts, who, in the next age, are to make up the great body of the world. And as the health and strength, or sickliness and weakness of our bodies, are very much owing to their methods of treating us when we were young; so the soundness or folly of our minds are not less owing to those first tempers and ways of thinking, which we eagerly received from the love, tenderness, authority, and constant conversation of our mothers. As we call our first language our *mother* tongue, so we may as justly call our first tempers our *mother* tempers; and perhaps it may be found more easy to forget the language, than to part entirely with those tempers which we learnt in the nursery.

“ That mothers, where they themselves have been well instructed, are more *capable* than men, of teaching their children, will appear from these considerations.—First, from their circumstances and condition of life: they are more within doors; have more time to spare; are best acquainted with their children’s tempers; and always have them in their eye. Secondly, they have an advantage from their own make and frame of mind; they are generally more apprehensive of danger, and of what may come hereafter, than men are. This makes them more concerned for their children’s everlasting welfare, and solicitous to teach them what they know them-

selves. Then, they are of a milder disposition; can bear with their children's infirmities, and correct them with a tenderness, which even recommends a necessary severity. By this means their children come to love them, and to be fond of their instruction, and to imitate their example. Besides all this, they are more patient of this kind of labour than men are. It is not the child's dulness, nor the necessity of often repeating the same things, that will weary or discourage the pious mother. And, which is not to be omitted, she has an opportunity of seeing whether her instructions are apprehended and followed; of destroying vices, while they are in bud; as also, of encouraging every commendable word and action, in its season.

“ In one word.—The mothers have an opportunity, both by their instruction and example, of fixing such lasting impressions upon their children's minds, as, by the blessing of God upon their endeavours, neither the iniquity of the age, nor the enemy of mankind, shall ever be able to blot out ¹.

¹ “ ‘ A proper and effectual education of the female sex, is one of the very first steps to be taken for the effectual improvement and civilization of the whole empire. For children fall inevitably into the hands and under the care of women, in their infant state: therefore their first and strongest impressions will be good or bad, salutary or destructive, according to the morals, character, and conduct of those women, under whose early tuition they may fall.’—*Dr. Brown's Sketch of a Plan of Legislation for the Russian Empire, given in the Biographia Britannica*, vol. ii. 664, 2d edition.”

“ Some very remarkable facts, confirming what has been said, deserve your utmost attention.

“ At this day, the children of Jews are always under the mother’s care and instruction, if living, till they come to a certain age ; during which time, they are taught to read the law, and so well instructed in its worth, and aim, and meaning, that they are very hardly, if ever, brought over to Christianity, either by the temporal or spiritual advantages which attend it.

“ One of the deputies at the synod of Dort informed that assembly, that in his country there was scarce a person, how poor and mean soever his condition was, but could read and give a tolerable account of his faith. This, he said, was owing chiefly to the great care that had been taken to instruct the *women*, who, when they came to be mothers, scarce ever failed to instruct their children.

“ St. Paul, addressing himself to his beloved Timothy, has these remarkable words : ‘ That I may be filled with joy, when I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice ; and I am persuaded that in thee also.’ You see, that the faith and piety, here commended and gloried in, were continued and propagated in the family by the women *chiefly*. That ‘ unfeigned faith,’ and that zeal for the glory of God, which was found in Timothy, and which qualified him for a bishop, or overseer, in the church of God, was derived to *him* from

his *mother* and *grandmother*, whose instruction and examples he followed; and so became an instrument of great good to the world.

“ Nor are examples wanting among ourselves of virtue and piety, the fear and the blessing of God, continued in families for many generations, by the religious care and concern of mothers, that have had a Christian education; who, however they may excuse themselves from some other labours, which attend the bringing up of their children, if they neglect *this*, are inexcusable; neither the tenderness of their constitution, nor the care of their families (much less the pleasures of the world); neither their quality on the one hand, nor their poverty on the other, will ever free them from the guilt, and infamy, and curse, which will attend those who shall suffer their children to grow up without principles, and without morality.

“ To the foregoing considerations it may be added, that virtue is not more the business of men, than it is of women, who are the one half of the human race, redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus Christ, and designed for eternal life. They are to live for themselves; they have as great a share in the rational nature as men have; they have as much reason to pretend to, and as much necessity to aspire after the highest accomplishments of a Christian and solid virtue, as the gravest and wisest among Christian philosophers. When we spoil them by a wrong education, we spoil that part of

the world which would otherwise, perhaps, furnish most instances of an eminent and exalted goodness; since they are naturally possessed of tempers and dispositions which, if duly improved by proper studies, and sober methods of education, would, in all probability, carry them to greater heights of piety, than are to be found among the generality of men. That women have no souls, is an assertion, which might proceed from the teacher of a *false* religion; by the Founder of the *true*, they are regarded in a very different light. To them were communicated the first tidings of His resurrection, and they had the honour to be appointed apostles to the apostles themselves.

“ Whether, therefore, we consider the capacities of women for attaining *knowledge*; or the sad consequences of their being left in *ignorance*, their influence on society as *servants*, as *wives*, as *mistresses of families*, and as *mothers*; or their constituting the *one half of the human race, redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus Christ, and designed for eternal life*; every way is evident the great importance of forming the female character by education.—To exhibit a picture of that character as it ought to appear, when formed, was the

“ 2d thing proposed.—The picture with which I shall present you, among other advantages, has that of antiquity. It was drawn by a masterly hand near three thousand years ago. It may be neces-

sary, therefore, to remove some of the effects of the time, and retouch the lines that have been clouded and obscured by length of years; in plain terms, to explain some parts of the description, which relate to ancient manners and customs, and show how they may be usefully applied to those of our own age and country. The description I mean, is that left us of a virtuous woman, by the wisest of men, in the last chapter of the book of Proverbs; a description, which all mothers and mistresses should teach the female pupils under their care to read and learn by heart.

“ Prov. xxxi. 10. ‘ Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies.’ Such an one is to be found, but not without some care and diligence in the search. She is well worth the pains taken in the forming her, and more to be valued by her happy possessor than the brightest diamond in the mines of the east.

“ ‘ 11. The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil.’ A well nurtured woman is man’s best and truest friend. Her fidelity is inviolable as the covenant of the Most High, and her purity unsullied as the light of heaven. Absent, as well as present, her husband relies upon her, for the preservation of his possessions, and of herself, the dearest and most precious of all. With such a steward at home, freed from care and anxiety, he goes forth to his own employ-

ment, whatever it may be. He has no occasion to rob others by sea or land; to plunder provinces, or starve nations. Instead of her squandering his substance to gratify her own vanity and folly, the economy of his wife furnishes the supplies, and nothing is wanting in due time and place.

“ ‘ 12. She will do him good, and not evil, all the days of her life.’ She will never abuse this confidence reposed in her, but endeavour to render herself daily more and more worthy of it. And even if her endeavours should not always meet with the desired success; if the good man should sometimes happen to be a little out of spirits, or out of temper; she will not therefore become so too. Her cheerfulness will revive and restore him. She will still ‘ do him good, and not evil,’ while he lives; and if she survive him, will continue to show the same attention and regard to his family and to his character. ‘ My Servius,’ said the Roman Valeria, holding in her arms the urn which contained the ashes of her husband, ‘ my Servius, though dead to the rest of the world, can never be otherwise than alive to me.’

“ Solomon’s description of a virtuous woman consists of twenty-two verses. It is well worthy your observation, that eleven of these verses (half the number) are taken up in setting forth her *industry* and the effects of it. I shall recite all these together, that you may see what a variety of magnificent language is made use of, to describe her different employments, to recommend simplicity of manners,

and make good housewifery and honest labour to be admired, in the rich and noble, as well as the poor and obscure among women. For you must bear in mind, that in works of the several kinds here mentioned, queens and princesses, of old time, disdained not to be occupied. You will likewise be pleased to consider, that if the rich are exempted from the necessity of working for *themselves*, they cannot be better employed than in working for the *poor*; since 'the coats and garments, made by the charity of Dorcas, were judged the best proofs of her goodness, that could be submitted to the inspection of an apostle.'

" ' 13. She seeketh wool and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands. 19. She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff. 17. She girdeth her loins with strength, and strengtheneth her arms. 15. She riseth also, while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens. 27. She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness. 21. She is not afraid of the snow for her household; for they are all clothed with double garments. 22. She maketh herself coverings of tapestry; her clothing is silk and purple. 24. She maketh fine linen, and selleth it; and delivereth girdles to the merchant. 18. She perceiveth that her merchandise is good: her candle goeth not out by night. 14. She is like the merchant ships; she bringeth her food from afar. 16. She considereth

a field, and buyeth it; with the fruits of her hands she planteth a vineyard.'—On account of this her marvellous and unceasing diligence, with the many and great advantages derived thereby to her family, well may it be said, as it is said of her, 25. 'Strength and honour are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come.'

" But the honour is not confined to herself. It extendeth to her friend and her companion in life; ' 23. Her husband is known in the gates, when he sitteth among the elders of the land;' that is, he is known as her husband; as a man blessed with such a wife; as indebted, perhaps, for his promotion, to the wealth acquired by her management at home (for honours are seldom open to the poor); for the splendour and elegance of his apparel, to the labour of her hands; and it may be, for the preservation and establishment of his virtue and integrity, to the encouragement in all that is holy, and just, and good, furnished by her example as well as her conversation, the nature of which is thus described.

" ' 26. She openeth her mouth with wisdom, and in her tongue is the law of kindness.' She thinks before she speaks; and, therefore, neither introduces a bad subject, nor disgraces a good one by an improper manner of discoursing upon it. And as charity reigns in her heart, nothing that is uncharitable proceeds out of her mouth: all is lenient and healing. To express the whole in a few words, she says nothing that is foolish, nothing that is ill-

natured. But her charity is shown in deeds as well as words—

“ ‘20. She stretcheth out her hands to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy.’ This is yet another good effect of her economy and management. She is not only able to provide plentifully for her household, but has always something in store for the poor. Since what avails a charitable disposition, where vanity, folly, and extravagance have taken away the power to exert it? In vain is ‘the hand stretched out,’ when there is nothing in it.

“ Having duly considered this finished character of the virtuous woman, we shall not be surprised at the praise bestowed upon it, in the remaining verses of the chapter.

“ ‘28. Her children rise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her,’ saying, ‘29. Many daughters have done virtuously; but thou excellest them all.’ Happy the children of such a mother; they will be living proofs of the care taken by her in their education, when she taught them to walk, by the paths of honour and virtue, to the mansions of rest and glory. Happy the husband of such a wife, who sees all things prosper under her direction, and the blessing of heaven derived to his family through her. They will all join in proclaiming, that among women who do well, honour is chiefly due to the virtuous and diligent wife, the affectionate and sensible mother.

“ 30. ‘ Favour,’ or rather ‘ gracefulness, is deceitful, and beauty is vain; but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised.’ A graceful person, and a set of fine features, are valuable things, but they are not always to be trusted; they may conceal tempers and dispositions very different from those one should have expected to find: and bitterer than wormwood must then be the disappointment of the man who has been directed to his choice by no other considerations. This, I say, *may* be the case. It is not often so, let us hope. God forbid it should. The face ought to be an index to the mind, and when all is fair without, as it is said of the king’s daughter in the psalm, ‘ all should be glorious within.’ But, let beauty have its due praise, and suppose what you will of it—suppose all that the poets say of it to be true; still, the wise man tells you, it is *vain*, it is in its nature transient, fleeting, perishing; it is the flower of the spring, which must fade in autumn; and when the blossom falls, if no fruit succeed, of what value, I pray you, is the tree? The grave is already opening for the most elegant person that moves, and the worms are in waiting to feed on the fairest face that is beholden. Labour, then, for that which endureth for ever: let your chief pains be bestowed on that part of the human composition which shall flourish in immortal youth, when the world and all that is in it shall disappear, and come no more into mind.—

‘ A woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised.’

“ 31. ‘ Give her of the fruit of her hands, and let her own works praise her in the gates.’

“ The crown which her own hands have thus formed shall be placed upon her head, as it were by general consent, even in this life; and her good deeds, celebrated in the public assemblies, shall diffuse an odour grateful as the smell of Eden, as the cloud of frankincense ascending from the holy altar. When her task is ended, the answer of a good conscience, and the blessings of all around, sweeter than the sweetest music, shall chant her to her repose; till awakened on the great morning of the world, descending angels shall introduce this daughter of Jerusalem into the joy of her Lord.

“ Such is the female character, and such the importance of forming it by education. Without education it cannot be formed; for we were all born equally ignorant, and are what we are by instruction¹.”

The heads of families, and those who can direct the formation of female character, must not disregard this important duty. Let them place in the hands of those females, who may come under their superintendence, the means of knowledge in all things suitable to their station and duties; and, above all,

¹ Bp. Horne, vol. ii. p. 353—367.

the knowledge of those things which concern the safety of their souls, and which also will, at the same time, contribute to their present welfare and respectability. And let all females, in whatever rank or station, give due attention to those studies and pursuits, which may advance them in that important knowledge, qualify them to do their respective duties, and adorn them with graces, far above pearls and precious stones, and all outward adorning; graces which are pleasing not only in the sight of man, but of God. Let them be inspired with a generous and religious emulation to adorn themselves with those qualifications, which may fit them like the "holy women of old," to be noted in the book of life, as benefactors of society, and examples of godliness and usefulness. Thus may they both grace and bless the community to which they belong. Like Rebecca, they may display the excellencies, and dispense the comforts, of conjugal fidelity and obedience; like Ruth, they may display the tender power, and unchangeable faithfulness, of a daughter's love; like Hannah, the pious cares of an affectionate and holy mother; like Naaman's maiden, the attachment and sympathy of a good and religious servant; like Lois and Eunice, they may sow the seeds of Christian consolation, and lay the foundation of a Christian minister's zeal and success; and finally, like Mary, they may choose "that good part which shall not be taken away," through Christ Jesus.

SERMON XLV.

ON PRAYER GENERALLY.

THE PRAYER.

Assist us mercifully, O Lord, in our supplications and prayers, and dispose the way of thy servants towards the attainment of everlasting salvation; that, among all the changes and chances of this mortal life, they may ever be defended by thy most gracious and ready help; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

PHIL. iv. 6, 7.

BE CAREFUL FOR NOTHING; BUT IN EVERY THING BY PRAYER AND SUPPLICATION WITH THANKSGIVING LET YOUR REQUESTS BE MADE KNOWN UNTO GOD. AND THE PEACE OF GOD, WHICH PASSETH ALL UNDERSTANDING, SHALL KEEP YOUR HEARTS AND MINDS THROUGH CHRIST JESUS.

WE have already shown how necessary to the true well-being of all it is, that a spirit of holiness and religion should prevail among families¹; and our manual, which we desire to render acceptable to masters of families for the purpose of being placed in the

¹ Sermon XX.

hands of their household, would be very defective indeed, were it to contain no discourses on a subject so essential as prayer. We will therefore now proceed to consider it in its several branches. 1. Prayer generally; 2. Private Prayer; 3. Public Prayer; 4. Family Prayer.

Prayer, in the strict sense of the word, means petition; the asking for something. But it is commonly understood in a much larger sense, and is used to denote all kinds of devotion and adoration offered to God. It comprehends under it not only the asking for what we need, but also our acts of praise and thanksgiving, our confession of unworthiness, our professions of repentance, our deprecation of the punishment of our guilt; in short, all the particulars of public and private devotion. And it is in this larger sense that I now use it, and in this sense it seems to have been contemplated by St. Paul, as may be seen by a comparison of the text with his exhortation to Timothy¹, wherein he speaks of public prayer in much the same terms as he does here of private prayer; showing that, under each, the same offices and objects may be understood to be comprehended.

Prayer, as distinguished from mere religious meditation, has been defined to be a *speaking* to God. "Your prayer," said Augustine, "is speaking to God; when you read, God speaks to you; when

¹ 1 Tim. ii. 1, 2.

you pray, you speak with God." For if we merely think of God without addressing Him, it is not prayer: but then it is to be remembered that words are not always necessary when we speak to God, we speak to Him mentally, in our mind, without uttering one single word. When we speak to our fellow-creatures, we cannot generally, with any certainty or clearness, express our thoughts without the assistance of words, either spoken or written. But this arises from our imperfection, and limited powers. God requires no such helps. He is the "Almighty God unto whom all hearts be open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid¹." He "understandeth our thoughts afar off²." The very dumb can pray, and though it may be said of them, as of the works of nature, that there is *neither speech nor language, yet their voices are heard*. "There is a language perceived of our inward spirit, and felt by that Spiritual Being whom we address. Many a prayer will ascend to the mercy-seat, and enter into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth, to which no outward form of words has been given, and for which no place has been set apart. To the *sighing* of the sorrowful, and the *desire* of the contrite, his ears are open, who has been Himself 'a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.' The lips may utter no sound, but the breast may be full, and its sorrow, its trust, its

¹ Collect for the Communion.

² Psalm cxxxix.

hope, and desire, like the gentle flowing of a crystal fountain, or the soft dew-drops of the morning prime, are grateful in the sight of the Almighty God. The sob of anguish, the tear, the bowed head, the humbled heart, can plead with an eloquence which no tongue can rival, and with a power to which no language can do justice. At home or abroad, in private or in public, by the labourer in the field, by the youth at his play, by the man of business at his desk, by the man of learning in his study, by the monarch on his throne, or by the captive in his dungeon : at all times, and in all places, the silent aspirations of prayer may be indulged, and the heart hold communion with its God. We may thus speak to God, without the aid of language. But we must speak to God, either in our mind, or by words ; otherwise it is not prayer¹."

In truth, though we speak of *mental* and *vocal* prayer as things which can have a distinct existence, we do not speak accurately so far as relates to *one* of them. For though the *desire* of the mind, laid in silence before God, without any words, is prayer ; yet the *words* of prayer, without the desire and aspiration of the soul², would no more be

¹ See the Editor's observations on this, Penny Sunday Reader, vol. v. p. 21, 22.

² "Prayer," observes Isidore, "is of the heart, not of the lips. For God does not weigh the words of the supplication, but looks to the heart of the petitioner. It is better to plead

prayer, than the garments of a man would be the man himself. They may be requisite generally, on account of man's imperfection, and as between man and man; but they are not only not the essence of prayer, but, as respects God, they would be nothing without the other. Indeed, even to our own feeble perception, more may be sometimes conveyed by the silent expression of unutterable anguish and affliction, than by all the power of language. When the affectionate, but solemn and penetrating glance of the Redeemer's eye was cast upon Peter, and the fallen apostle, feeling all the power of its rebuke, rushed from His presence, and burst into a bitter agony of tears, who would not have read in those tears the inward workings of prayer, the remorse, the shame, the sorrow, the repentance, which had bowed his heart, and filled it so, that prayer, before it could find expression in words, was compelled to vent itself in tears? Or who, in these tears, would not have read the characters of feeling, which no words could embody, and under which language had failed?

But, though I state that the aspiration of the soul, without words, would be prayer, and that words, without the aspiration of the soul, would not be prayer, let me not be understood to recommend mental prayer as a *general practice*. Our prayers

from the heart without the voice, than in mere words of which the mind is inattentive to the sense."

ought generally to be clothed in words. We could not pray *jointly* at all, without a form of words. "Neither, even as individuals, or in private, ought we always, or even generally, to pray without clothing our thoughts in words. We must not, in contemplating the power of God to understand our thoughts, forget our own infirmity, which requires the aid of outward forms. We must not be led away by the beauty and deep feeling, which, upon *extraordinary* occasions, will burst forth, in these mental prayers, to neglect that mode of prayer, the clothing our thoughts in words, which is suited to the *ordinary* purposes of prayer, and the *ordinary* circumstances of those who pray. We are placed in a body frail and imperfect, and moving in a world, in which the communications and workings of the soul must be carried on, through the bodily organs, and outward senses. Those deep feelings under which all the inward powers of prayer, alluded to, are put into motion, are not incidental to our every day business, nor could they be borne by the mind continually; and if prayer were never to be expressed in words, it would become to us as a soul without a body, too spiritual for mortal faculties¹."

From these observations on the nature of prayer, we will proceed to some general reasons, from

¹ Sunday Reader, vol. v. p. 22.

which the duty of offering it to God may be enforced.

It has been justly remarked, by Archbishop Sharpe, that prayer is not only speaking to God, but something more than speaking to Him. "It may, perhaps," says that able divine, "at the first hearing appear strange to some, that prayer should at all be accounted a duty of religion; that is to say, any act of piety towards God, to which mankind should in duty be obliged. For (say they) all acts of religion, in the very nature of them, ought to respect the honour of God; whereas prayer seems only to respect our own benefit, and little, if at all, God's honour: when a beggar asketh an alms at your door, doth he thereby mean to do you any worship or respect, or rather purely to serve his own needs? Certainly the latter. It is true, to give thanks for benefits received, (which is one part of prayer, in the large sense of the word), is an instance of respect and honour done to God; but prayer, strictly so called, that is, the putting up requests to God for mercies which we want, seems not to be so, but only to respect ourselves. Thus, perhaps, it may be said; but those that reason at this rate, seem not to have sufficiently considered this matter. Though prayer be put up for the obtaining benefits for ourselves, yet that doth not hinder, but that it may be an act of religion properly so called, and an instance of that honour which we are bound to perform to

God. And certainly we must think so, if we will ever believe God's own declarations in this matter, or reflect on the nature of prayer itself.

“ First, as for the holy Scriptures, prayer is always therein accounted an act of God's worship, and strictly enjoined as such to all mankind. In the 15th Psalm, ver. 13, where God is declaring to his people how he will be served ; *Thinkest thou* (says he) *that I will eat bulls' flesh, or drink the blood of goats ? Offer unto God thanksgivings, and pay thy vows unto the Most High, and call upon me in the day of trouble.* As therefore he that offereth unto God thanksgivings, is in the same Psalm said to honour God (*he that offereth me thanks, he honoureth me ;*) so he that calleth upon God, honoureth him also. Nay, so great a part doth prayer make of religion, that the whole of it is sometimes expressed thereby, and to call upon God, to pray to God, and to seek God, is in the Scripture language the same thing as to walk religiously before God ; nay, it is sometimes put to express and signify the whole condition that is required of us in order to salvation. Thus, Romans xii. 17. *The same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him, for whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.* And, on the other side, the character by which wicked men, such as have no sense of piety and religion, are described in Scripture, is, that they do not practise this duty of prayer, they do not call upon God, as you may see, Psalm liii. 4.”

The same point is proved from the nature of prayer, which, independently of its connexion with our necessity, is an act of homage justly due to the Most High. There is an acknowledgment of His goodness, and our dependance on Him in prayer; as well as in thanksgiving. The only difference between them in this respect is, as the author above quoted observes, that "the one (that is, thanksgiving) looks backward and considers the mercies acknowledged as already given; the other (that is prayer) looks forward and considers them as not yet given, but only as desired and expected." He says, that "to every religious prayer that we put up, (if we put it up as we should do) there will go these four things:—

"First of all, there is supposed a sense of our wants, and a desire of the supply of them, but withal a conviction of our own impotence and inability to help ourselves. Secondly, there is supposed a sense of God's presence, and providence, and goodness, and a belief that God doth see our condition, and knows what we want, and hath also that love and kindness for His creatures, that upon prayer He will supply our necessities, and give us either what we pray for, or what is more convenient for us. Upon these considerations there follows, in the third place, a looking up to God, a waiting upon Him for those blessings we stand in need of, disclaiming all help in ourselves, and entirely depending on His care and

kindness for the supply of whatsoever we desire. Now in the fourth and last place, when we come to form this sense, and those desires, and this dependance, into direct addresses to God, when we make expression of them by actual application to the throne of His grace, whether in thought alone, or in thought and word too, then is our prayer completed. This I take to be a true account of this duty of prayer, which being admitted, we may from hence observe, in the first place, not only that prayer hath an immediate prospect to the honour of God, as well as any of the other duties of piety, most properly so called, and consequently is no such mean selfish business as some profane wits are apt to account it; but also that it is a duty which we do so indispensably owe to God, that we must be horribly injurious to Him, as well as to ourselves, if we neglect it: nay, we must first be supposed to be none of His creatures before we can be excused from it; for is not every creature in the very nature of creatureship, bound to renounce all self-sufficiency, and to take all opportunities to acknowledge to his Creator the sovereignty He hath over him, and to express his dependance upon Him for every thing he hopes for? But what is this but the very essence of prayer, as we have described it? Nay, though we had no advantage of our own to be promoted by prayer, as being sure that God would supply all our necessities without our asking Him, yet even in this case would prayer be as

necessary a duty as it is now, because it would for ever become us to pay our homage to God, and to own Him as the Author of all those blessings we expect from Him ; it will for ever be as reasonable and as great an instance of piety, to depend upon God for His mercies to come, and to express that dependance by address of prayer to Him, as it will be to acknowledge His mercies past, and to express that acknowledgment by address of thanksgiving to Him."

But God has not left this duty to Him only to be inferred from the nature of prayer. He has in His holy Word expressly claimed it as His prerogative, and as His appointed means by which we must seek His blessing and favour. We find both the Old and the New Testaments agreeing in the necessity and privileges of prayer. We find it pressed upon us in every form, and by various arguments and motives. We have sometimes positive precepts, sometimes affectionate expostulations, sometimes terrible rebuke, sometimes kind encouragement, and sometimes careful directions, all relating to prayer: "Thou shalt make thy prayer unto him," says Job, "and he shall hear thee¹." Take with you words," exhorts Hosea, "and turn unto the Lord and say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously²." Jesus confirms this counsel, "Watch ye therefore and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to

¹ Job xxii. 27.

² Hosea xiv. 2.

escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man ¹." Again, in the language of expostulation, Jeremiah exclaims, "Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, My Father, thou art the guide of my youth ²." In that of rebuke, Isaiah denounces the folly of those that ask for the help of man, instead of looking to the Lord, "Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help, and stay in horses, and trust in chariots, because they are many, and in horsemen, because they are very strong: but they look not to the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the Lord ³."

Jesus, in the parable of the importunate widow, sets before us the encouragement of ultimate success ⁴. And, in various parts of the Gospel, His directions in prayer occur, and show the importance which He attached to this duty. I shall cite three such passages, the two first relating to the dispositions with which we must ask, in order that our prayers may be acceptable to God: and the other, setting forth the ground on which alone, and even with these dispositions, they are, or can be, acceptable to God: "All things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive ⁵." "And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any; that your Father which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven

¹ Luke xxi. 36.

² Jer. iii. 4.

³ Isai. xxxi. 1.

⁴ Luke xviii. 1—8.

⁵ Matt. xxvi. 22.

forgive your trespasses¹.” “And whatsoever you shall ask in MY NAME, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask in my name, I will do it².”

Besides this we have the declarations of the Psalmist of his experience of the truth of the promises made to prayer, his acknowledgment that “in the day when he cried,” God answered and gave ear unto him. We have the examples of the many illustrious worthies who by prayer triumphed, and were helped on in their trouble. We have the prayers of Elijah, restoring the widow’s son; the prayers of David, establishing his throne; the prayers of Daniel, defeating the wicked designs of his crafty and powerful enemies; the prayer of Hannah, granted in a dutiful and pious son, the glory of his mother, and a blessing to his country; the prayer of Solomon, giving him wisdom and honour; the prayer of the leper, causing him to be cleansed; the prayer of the blind, procuring him sight; the prayer of the Gentile woman, obtaining the release of her daughter from the power of Satan; the prayer of St. Peter, saving him from sinking in the waves of the sea; the prayers of Cornelius, bringing an apostle with the message of salvation, and the gifts of the Holy Ghost, to himself and his household. We have these, and innumerable other miraculous answers to prayer. They are recorded for our

¹ Mark xi. 24. 26.

² John xiv. 13, 14.

learning, and encouragement: they assure us, that the great and merciful God, who suspended the laws of nature, and made the powers of darkness bow to His word, at the prayers of His faithful servants, will not be wanting now, to grant us the *ordinary* aid of His Holy Spirit, and to give us that strength which will enable us to work out our salvation, through Him who died for us. Nay more, not only has He given us both assurance, and proof, that He expects us to pray, and that He will answer our prayer in all things that tend to our real and final happiness; He has proceeded yet further in His goodness, and has imposed even a greater obligation, and set before us a greater encouragement to pray, than all these. He has not only commanded us to pray, and promised to grant the object of our prayers, but He has also promised to *help* us to pray. He knoweth our unworthiness and our imperfections. Behold how He cheers us under the former, and offers us a remedy for the latter. Nay more, He tells us that the Spirit Himself joins in our prayer, and becomes an intercessor. “Ye have not received,” declares the inspired apostle Paul, “the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. Likewise the Spirit also *helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought*; but the Spirit itself *maketh intercession for us* with groanings, which cannot be uttered. And He that searcheth the hearts know-

eth what is the mind of the Spirit, because He maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God ¹." Therefore ask of this gracious Sovereign, this loving and careful Father, ask of Him "in faith," "nothing doubting." "Cast your care upon Him, for He careth for you." Follow the counsels of St. Paul in the text, and you will obtain the blessed result which St. Paul promises you: "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

¹ Rom. viii. 15. 26, 27.

SERMON XLVI.

PRIVATE PRAYER.

THE PRAYER.

LET thy merciful ears, O Lord, be open to the prayers of thy humble servants; and that they may obtain their petitions, make them to ask such things as shall please thee; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

MATT. vi. 6.

THOU, WHEN THOU PRAYEST, ENTER INTO THY CLOSET.

IN the preceding sermon we treated of prayer generally, and spake of it as a tribute of homage both due to God and commanded in His Holy Word. But now, that we proceed to consider it under the several special and different uses of it, by individuals, by the congregation, or by families, we must contemplate it not only in relation to God, but in its usefulness and importance to man.

“Prayer,” says a celebrated father¹, “is a support to the person praying, a sacrifice to God, and

¹ Augustine.

a scourge for devils." It is not because God has any need of this homage, but because prayer is in itself beneficial to us, that He has ordained it as a means of His grace and favour. And this we shall show, in many particulars, as we proceed to discuss the several kinds of prayer above mentioned.

Our present subject is *private* prayer.

It is, perhaps, a necessary caution to request those, to whom this discourse may be addressed, to bear in mind, that it is not my intention, in setting forth the duty, or the advantages of private prayer, to institute any comparison between it, and public prayer, much less to depreciate the latter, or to intimate that the former may be substituted in its place, and be sufficient without it. No such comparison can be drawn; for they are both excellent, and both necessary. But they are each excellent for different purposes, and each promotes, in its measure and province, dispositions, and effects, tending to the same end. Having premised this caution, I will now proceed to state,

I. The authority for the practice of it.

II. The uses and advantages of it.

I. With respect to authority, the text gives a decisive and explicit direction: "Thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet." And, in both the Old and New Testaments, frequent examples are recorded of men, illustrious for their piety, and for their greatness in God's favour, having recourse to

private prayer on remarkable occasions,—whether engaging in matters of importance, struggling with difficulties, or groaning under the pressure of affliction. Elijah, when imploring the miraculous interposition of Almighty power to restore the life of the widow's son, *retires to pray in the loft* in which he slept. David, in adversity, lifts up his heart to the Lord in the *night season*. Daniel, amidst the crafty and dangerous snares of a powerful faction anxious to take his life, *retires to his chamber*, to kneel upon his knees in prayer and thanksgiving before his God, three times a day. Jesus, when about to make a solemn appointment of His twelve Apostles, “*went out into a mountain to pray*, and continued all night in prayer.” And when the hour of His trial and agony was at hand, and the wretched traitor Judas was approaching to betray Him, He prepared Himself for the conflict, with the powers of darkness, by private prayer; He desired His disciples to remain and watch, while He *went apart to pray*.

Enough has been adduced to show that private prayer is recommended in Scripture, no less by example than by precept. Now let us consider its uses and advantages.

The first advantage of private prayer, is that which we alluded to in speaking of *mental* prayer, that it can be brought into use and action at any time or place. Whether we are in business, or whether we are in trouble,—whether we sit, or

walk,—whether we rise up, or lie down,—whether we labour, or whether we rest,—whether in fear or in security, in joy or in sorrow, in pain or in pleasure,—amidst the noisiest throng, or in the deepest solitude,—we can privately lift up our hearts to God, and hold sweet and comforting converse with Him in prayer. “Nothing hinders,” observes Towerson, “but, whilst the hands of the diligent woman are holding the distaff, or those of the labouring man are busied about his employment, the heart, at least, of both the one and the other may lift up itself to God in prayer, and either implore, or give Him thanks for, His assistance and protection. Sure I am, those of the ancient Church went yet farther than that, yea, such of the members of it as were sufficiently encumbered with the business of the world. For we find by a *learned man*¹ of our own nation, who hath particularly remarked the testimonies of the ancients for it, that the *singing of David’s psalms*, those excellent incentives to, and instruments of devotion, *was the attendant of such persons’ businesses and meals, that it was their companion in their shops, and no less so in the field, that whereas the custom of the world had taught others to deceive the wearisomeness and length of business by any kind of singing, these did it by the singing of pious and holy hymns; like the skilful and industrious pilot, having at the same time their*

¹ Hammond.

eye upon heaven, whilst their hand was busy in guiding of the helm."

Oh! what a consolation, what a privilege is this, of being able to lift up our hearts, and make known our dangers and necessities, by a mental communication with one who is mighty to save, and who, we know, will never leave us, nor forsake us. How great is the happiness, that the humblest individual has at hand always such a powerful friend to whom he can speak against the oppressor,—that the unlearned has near him so wise a counsellor to whom he can at any time speak to ask advice in difficulty,—that the feeble and afflicted has about his path, and about his bed, One, whose hand will hold him, and whose right hand will lead him; that the diseased sufferer can speak with Him who "will strengthen him on his bed of languishing, and make all his bed in sickness;" and finally, that the last breath of the dying may utter the accents of prayer, and hope, and faith, to Him who "is the resurrection and the life," and in whom he that believeth, "shall live though he die." How blessed is the privilege of being, at all times, and in all places and circumstances, able to speak to Him in our heart, even while to the world our lips utter no sound.

"When thou prayest," says Augustine, "cry not with thy voice, but with thy mind. For God plainly hears even the silent, nor is the place of so much importance as the intent. Jeremiah is cheered

in his dungeon;—Daniel exults amidst the lions;—the three children leap for joy in the fiery furnace;—Job, naked upon a dung-heap, triumphs;—the thief, on the very cross, gains paradise. There is no place in which God is not."

II. Again, private prayer is both necessary and useful, inasmuch as we have each many things which specially concern us, and us only—to ask, to confess, and to be thankful for. How frequently do we both need, and earnestly desire, things in which our brethren can have no interest whatsoever? How often are those things immediately necessary to us, and to be asked without the delay of assembling others, and even without time to think of words? How often, also, is there a joy in our hearts, with which the world meddles not; and a gratitude, which the world could neither appreciate nor feel? In these, and other cases, the heart must give itself vent in private prayer, and cannot impart its feelings, nor communicate its petitions to the congregation. And, in offering such prayers, and such thanksgivings, the natural and necessary consequence is an increased acquaintance with our own character and defects, and with God's goodness.

The very objects of private prayer are generally things bound up in the heart, and arising from an inward consciousness of guilt, or of weakness. Even the preparation of private prayer, sometimes, re-

quires self-examination to know what we need; and though, sometimes, our very feelings suggest the prayer without formal examination, yet the result is the same: the sense of want, or the feeling of gratitude dictates it. The heart is conscious of its necessities and its obligations; and when this consciousness compels us, in retirement, and apart from the hurry and bustle of the world, to commune with God in such a frame of mind, will not such communion, and such an employment, incline us daily to take new pleasure in it, and to search more deeply into that heart of which we behold the weakness. The circumstances in which we address ourselves to Him in private prayer, are favourable to the promotion of meditation and self-knowledge. The gratitude and sense of God's mercy which these inspire, will be less easily obliterated; and the repentance and holy resolution which may arise, will be likely to take firm root, not terminating in mere sorrow, but in a permanent change of heart and life.

III. Another advantage of sincere and earnest private prayer is, the *habit* it will establish of feeling ourselves to be always in the presence of God. If we truly speak to Him, whether in words, or in our mind, we must believe Him to be always present with us. And what a valuable safeguard will such a belief present to us. It has been

observed, that the presence of even a child has often produced such an effect on the conscience, as to restrain the hand of the wicked on the very eve of the commission of crime. Guilt knows its own deformity, and stands abashed at the eye of any spectator, however insignificant. But how great must be the dread and shame which must arise where there is a consciousness and lively sense of God's presence. Who would dare to commit crime, if he could behold the eye of God looking upon him, and noting the deed? Who would encourage impure and covetous desires, unhallowed thoughts, and fierce passions in his heart, if he could only discern God looking into that heart, and reading all its devices and intentions? Yet, when we truly speak to God in prayer, these truths are brought before us. We know, indeed, that with the eye of our body we behold not the Being to whom we speak: but we discern Him spiritually, and we contemplate Him as a *Spirit*, "to whom all hearts be open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid." Can we pray to such a Being, can we habitually and seriously address Him as "about our path, and about our bed, and spying out all our ways," and yet act in His presence deeds, which we should blush to commit in the presence of the lowest and feeblest of our fellow-creatures.

IV. The very *act* of prayer tends to accomplish

its object, and to procure for us many of those things which we seek, and to guard us from many of those evils which we deprecate.

This may be seen from the considerations we have just mentioned; its tendency to make us better acquainted with ourselves, and to impress us with a constant sense of God's presence. On the one hand, it brings before us our faults and our necessities at a time when our pride and self-love are less disposed to resist our convictions. We are in solitude, there is none to witness our shame and humiliation, and therefore we are less reluctant to yield to their emotions, and submit to the confessions and self-reproaches which they suggest, or to retrace the steps which we have taken in the wrong path. We have less objection to acknowledge our unworthiness and dependance, and to ask for that strength and help, which we feel ourselves unable to supply. We are in the same position as one who is rebuked, or convicted of error and folly. If he be in public, or be reproved and confuted by an opponent, he is often excited by pride and self-love to increase his offence, or, at least, to refuse any acknowledgment of it. But before the gentle remonstrances of a friend, or kind advice of a parent, given in *private*, his heart will be bowed down, and his reformation promoted, or his difficulties acknowledged, and the proffered aid thankfully received. In private prayer, we are somewhat in the same position, with even the greater advantage, that the friend and coun-

sellor is our conscience convicting us of sin, or showing us our helplessness and our necessities. The frequent *habit* of placing ourselves in this position, and then speaking of these things in the presence of our heavenly Father, must tend to improve our hearts, and prepare us to receive mercy and good from His bounteous hands.

I say in the presence of God, not but that we are always in God's presence, whether we are doing good or evil, whether we think of it, or are regardless of it. But when I speak of being in God's presence in *prayer*, I might, perhaps, (without irreverence) say, we are rather in *company* and *intercourse* with God than in His presence. There is the same difference between the different modes of being in His presence, and being in His company, as there is in being in the presence, or in the company, of a great, and wise, and good man. You may be in the presence of that man in a crowd, and not be conscious of his presence ;—you may be in his presence as a stranger, or as an enemy ;—you may be in his presence if you were a culprit at the bar, and he sitting as your judge ; but when you are said to be in the habit of being in his company when none other is present, when on all occasions you speak with him—make known your wants to him—consult with him—lean upon him as a friend—then you are in his company, and peculiarly in his presence ; so you are with God in prayer. And as the company of a good and wise man cannot fail to

improve you in all knowledge, and in those dispositions which distinguish him, so the habit of being in the company of God in prayer, will in its very act improve you both in heart and mind.

Moreover, in the case of the kind of man we have supposed, such frequent company will tend to cement your friendship, to render him more anxious to serve you, and you more desirous to profit by his services. Will not the Lord, in like manner, befriend all those that seek Him? Is such an association, as here represented, too familiar? is it more than we may presume to hope? No; Jesus Himself has represented Himself in that very character, and graciously condescended to invite His disciples thus to approach Him: "Henceforth," He said, "I call you not servants, for the servant knows not what his lord doth; but I have called you FRIENDS, for all things that I heard of my Father, have I made known unto you ¹."

And will not the knowledge and the principles, implanted and fostered by communion in prayer with such a friend, tend to accomplish most of those objects of prayer which relate to our improvement, and to secure from His power and goodness those helps and supplies which relate to our dangers, our difficulties, or our wants? If we would but compare the blessings of being permitted to speak to such a friend, with the advantages which we expect to derive from those

¹ John xv. 15.

earthly friends, whose society we so earnestly covet, and make such great sacrifices to share,—we should look upon prayer as our noblest privilege, and sweetest solace; the more, especially, when we consider the unfailing excellence of the friend we speak to. “He,” said South, “who will give up his name to Christ in *faith unfeigned*, and a sincere obedience to all His righteous laws, shall be sure to find love for love, and *friendship for friendship*. The success is certain and infallible; and none ever yet miscarried in the attempt. For Christ freely offers his friendship to all; and sets no other rate upon so vast a purchase, but only that we would suffer him to be our *friend*. Thou, perhaps, spendest thy precious time in waiting upon such a great one, and thy estate in presenting him; and, probably, after all, hast no other reward, but sometimes to be *smiled upon*, and always to be smiled at; and when thy greatest and most pressing occasions shall call for succour and relief, then to be deserted and cast off, *and not known*. Now, I say, turn the stream of thy endeavours another way, and bestow but half of that hearty, sedulous attendance upon thy Saviour in the duties of prayer and mortification; and be at half that expense in charitable works, by relieving Christ in His poor members; and, in a word, study as much to please Him *who died for thee*, as thou dost to court and humour thy great patron, who *cares not for thee*, and thou shalt make Him thy friend for ever; a friend, who

shall own thee in thy lowest condition, speak comfort to thee in all thy sorrows, counsel thee in all thy doubts, answer all thy wants, and, in a word, *never leave thee, nor forsake thee.* But when all the hopes, that thou hast raised upon the promises, or supposed kindnesses of the fastidious and fallacious great ones of the world, shall fail, and upbraid thee to thy face, He shall then take thee into His bosom, embrace, cherish, and support thee; and, as the Psalmist expresses it, *He shall guide thee with his counsel here, and afterwards receive thee into glory."*

Finally. Those very dispositions which are required in Scripture to accompany prayer, will tend to secure the accomplishment of its objects.

First, Fervency and sincerity.—If we pray in this spirit, our service cannot terminate in mere words; we shall not be satisfied to ask for what we want. But our desires being fervent, and our need real, we shall naturally proceed from words to deeds, and our exertions will be consistent with our prayers.

Secondly, We are to ask in *faith*.—If we believe that He to whom we pray has given the promise, and possesses the power, to grant our reasonable petitions, those efforts, which fervent and sincere prayer will lead us to make, will be exerted with greater confidence and courage, and consequently with greater effect. The assurance of victory will animate the courage of the soldier,—the assurance

of reaping the harvest will cheer the toils of the labourer,—and faith, accompanying the prayer of the Christian, will cause him, in like manner, to proceed in his course with a “merry heart, which doeth good like a medicine,” strengthening him, and causing him to overcome all difficulties, and defy all dangers.

Thirdly, We are to ask with humility, and submission to the will of God.—This also will tend to assist in securing our final success in the attainment of the objects of prayer. We are apt to be discouraged in our exertions by imaginary, almost as much as by real failures and difficulties. And so short-sighted is man, both by his very constitution, and from the power of his prejudices and passions, that he is not only prone to invent difficulties, but often to mistake even success for defeat. Thousands of accidents befall us, which we, foolish short-sighted mortals, should at first sight be ready to pronounce great evils and calamities, but which afterwards turn out to be great blessings. Now what a sinister and discouraging effect would these often have upon our efforts, unless we were taught to rely upon wisdom and knowledge superior to our own, and in a goodness, which we know never faileth. We should be apt to give up in despair at the very moment when circumstances were taking place, which would lead to our ultimate success. How useful then to us is that instruction which teaches us to offer up prayer in submission

to God's will, "casting all 'our care upon him, for he careth for us," and persevering in our exertions, because we know that all things, however seemingly adverse, will at last work together for good to those that love Him.

Lastly. The object of prayer is promoted, by its being required frequently.—"Pray without ceasing." Thus all those dispositions and requisites, which we have shown to be so useful, will become *habitual*. Our heart being constantly thus cheered and strengthened, our minds filled with knowledge by frequently speaking to God in prayer, we shall not only pray, but "not faint:" we shall pray not as matter of labour, but as indulging our ruling passion, and promoting our most engrossing pursuit, and that in which we most desire and labour to succeed. And as prayer also is the appointed means of grace, God will not Himself be wanting to crown His own appointed means with success. The prayer often offered, though it be short, and though it be silent, yet will ascend to the "Father who seeth in secret and will reward openly."

SERMON XLVII.

THE SOCIAL PRINCIPLE OF PUBLIC WORSHIP.

THE PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY GOD, who hast given us grace with one accord to make our common supplications unto thee ; and dost promise, that when two or three are gathered together in thy Name, thou wilt grant their requests ; Fulfil, O Lord, the desires and petitions of thy servants, as may be most expedient for them ; granting us in this world knowledge of thy truth, and in the world to come life everlasting ; through thy Son, our Lord, Jesus Christ. Amen.

1 TIM. ii. 1.

I EXHORT THEREFORE, THAT, FIRST OF ALL, SUPPLICATIONS, PRAYERS, INTERCESSIONS, AND GIVING OF THANKS, BE MADE FOR ALL MEN.

ST. PAUL, in the portion of his Epistle from which the text is taken evidently intends his instructions to Timothy, as directions for the conduct of the Church, over which the latter presides ; and points out the subjects which ought to be embraced, and the principles which should prevail, in their public prayers.

The “supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks,” are to be “made for *all* men.” And the reason he gives for which Christ, who is the head of the body of the Church, requires this, is because Christ desires *all* to be saved, and has made us one in our hopes and interests, that all should be concerned in each other’s welfare and salvation; that no member of the body should have life or interest separate from the other members; but that each should bear in affectionate remembrance their union and connexion under *one* God and one *Mediator*, who set us the example of loving *all*, and gave Himself a ransom for *all*.

It was observed, in the preceding Sermon, that no comparison could be instituted between private and public prayer; that they are each, in their respective provinces, and for their respective purposes, excellent; and however excellent each may be in that province, and for those purposes, the Christian’s duty to God and his own soul will not be done, unless he shall carefully attend to both. Indeed so far will the man, who is diligent in the use of private prayer, be from supposing that he has thereby done the whole of his devotional duty, or from wishing to plead that diligence as an excuse for neglecting public prayer, that he will find his reverence and his love of public prayer continually heightened by his practice of private prayer. He will find in it not only the call of duty, but the source of pure and exquisite pleasure and enjoyment. It will be

viewed as his privilege and his joy. He will, as the Psalmist did, delight to enter in the courts of the Lord's house; he will regard it as a gracious and happy invitation; he will be glad when his brethren say unto him, "We will go up into the house of the Lord." It will be the outbreak of his heart longing to enter into that sacred place, rejoicing in that holy company, that "*goodly fellowship*," and with joy and gratitude giving utterance to its feelings. It will be to him, as it was to the first disciples, a sweet solace in trouble, a strength under oppression and persecution, a joy even in adversity: in all circumstances he will be drawn into close union and sympathy with his brethren to continue "with one accord in prayer and supplication."

I have said, rejoicing in that *holy company*, that "*goodly fellowship*," for the Christian cannot look upon himself as a solitary and unconnected being. We have already shown¹ how we depend upon each other for our comforts, our advantages, our very existence; and how evidently the Almighty has designed us for society. But if man, in other respects is a social being, if he has common interest in all other things with his fellow-creatures, surely in matters of religion he is especially connected with them. "If," argues Stillingfleet, "man's nature be sociable in all other things, then nature will tell men, they ought to be so in things of common

¹ Sermons IX. & X.

concernment to them all, and which are every one's work and duty, as religion is. If in other things men are sociable, much more in this: for religion gives a great improvement to man's sociable nature, and therefore Plutarch well calls religion, a cemented foundation, the bond of all communion and constitutions."

The practice of all the most enlightened heathen nations acknowledging both this principle, and also the utter impossibility of a religious society (whether professing true or false religion) being able to exist without public worship, is too well known to need the citation of any examples or proofs. But under both the Jewish and the Christian dispensations this principle of association in public worship is most remarkably conspicuous. The ministrations of the patriarchs in sacrifice, the promises figured under the sacrifices, the public nature of the blessings promised, the frequent communications of the heads of the family with God Himself, the prophecies revealed to them, showed that the patriarchal government was essentially religious, that the solemn acts of devotion related as having been performed by the patriarchs, were acts of religious homage from the family, or rather the *congregation of families*, the *church*, over which they presided. The family, or people, took the name of those fathers who were distinguished for *piety*; and God calls Himself *their* God. Their avowed bond of union was profession of the *same faith*, partaking of

the *same worship*, and being *chosen* to preserve the *same religion*. The outward sign of being members of *Abraham's family* was not confined to those who were born of him according to the flesh; it was given to those who were adopted into his family by embracing his faith. It was not birth only, but *regeneration*; it was *religion*, that enrolled them in one family; it was having *one faith* and *one Lord*.

Such a people could no more dispense with an institution, so manifestly essential as public worship, to the vital exercise, and demonstration, of their connexion with God, and of the community of religious interest, than the soul could continue its visible functions, and operations on earth, without the body. The acts of public worship noticed in the brief history of the patriarchs, are, from the very nature of that history, few, and recorded with a very scanty statement of circumstances. But those notices are precisely such as we might expect upon a subject, on which it was evidently felt by the historian that there could be no kind of doubt. After the giving of the law, the regulations, which the Lord, with a view both to the preparation of the people for the coming of Jesus, and to the peculiar circumstances of the Jewish nation, thought fit to establish, have shown the importance and usefulness of public worship in His sight. And every reader of the Scriptures knows what a firm bond of union the temple service was to that singular people. Their historians, prophets, and priests have left

many and beautiful narratives and proofs how the Jews revered and loved the place, in which they, and their forefathers, *joined* in worship; how, in the land of their captivity, the desire of the house of their God prevailed over the sense of their degradation and affliction; and how, regardless of the threats of the oppressors, and at the hazard of their lives, they turned in prayer towards the temple of the Lord. Theirs was, indeed, social and national worship. It bound them together, it bound them to their country. "By the waters of Babylon they sat down and wept, when they remembered thee, O Zion."

But still more, with still greater power, and in a far more comprehensive bond, does public worship bind *us* together. It binds the Christian not only to the congregation of the Church on earth, but to the innumerable company of the saints in heaven. It binds us to the eternal Zion, of which the temporal Zion was but a shadow. By the waters of this world, this strange country of our bondage in the flesh, the Christian, in public worship, remembers with his brethren in captivity, the better country, the home, the heavenly Jerusalem, of which they hope hereafter to take possession. Their common interest in this heavenly Zion is the bond which connects each individual member of Christ's Church with his fellows, and leads him to lift up his heart and voice with them, in crying for their common deliverance, and praying for their common

prosperity. Our union of interest, as in the course of these Sermons has been frequently stated, is set forth by the writers of the New Testament under a variety of figures, and in the strongest colours. The Christian community is represented as a house, a kingdom, a body, of which all the members are so inseparably united, that the whole must partake of the sufferings, or of the success, of each. I will not again dwell upon these, but only observe, that any person who has the least knowledge of his relation to his brethren as members of Christ's Church, cannot possibly consider himself as a solitary being, a being who has no prayer to offer but private prayer, who has nothing that he needs in common with others, nothing to be thankful for which concerns the general body, no desire to seek for his brethren as well as himself God's mercy and goodness, no interest in the general confession, repentance, and faith; nothing, in short, which will affect him, as connected with the congregation. Such a selfish notion of prayer would be in utter contradiction to the spirit of the religion of that Lord, who Himself is *love*, and of whom the *whole family* in heaven and earth is named. We have, indeed, private wants to supply, private sins to confess, private blessings to acknowledge; but we have *public* also, and they must be the subjects of public prayer and thanksgiving. This close connexion and sympathy of Christians with each other, is inseparable from the very notion of their being such, or having any

union with Christ as their head. "Truly," says St. John; "our *fellowship* is with the *Father*, and with His Son *Jesus Christ*¹." And immediately afterwards he speaks of this fellowship with Christ, and with one another, as practically so inseparable, that the one cannot subsist without the other. "If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: but if we walk in the light, we have fellowship *one with another*, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin²."

And St. Luke, in the Acts of the Apostles, shows public worship to be a necessary consequence of this fellowship, and necessary means of manifesting and maintaining it, when he expressly maintains, that the early Christians continued stedfastly, not only "in the Apostles' doctrine," but in their "fellowship," and "in *breaking of bread, and in prayers*."

The Church of Christ, as we have observed, is described as a *body*, and each of us as *members* of it. While the life and action of each member, in its own sphere, may appear in private prayer, the life and action of the whole body, acting as a *body*, is in public worship. Here, especially, we act together as one body, with one common object, one interest, one hope. Here each member works with its fellow members for the "perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of

¹ 1 John i. 3.

² Ibid. vi. 7.

Christ¹." Here, especially, have we fellowship one with another; here we show, that we are indeed "one body," and have "one spirit;" that we are "called in one hope of our calling;" that we acknowledge "one Lord, one faith." And here we act according to our profession, and avow our reliance in the promises made to us, in the one baptism, which enrolls us into the family of the "one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in all." Nay more, this fellowship is not confined to the mere branch of Christ's Church, to which his country may attach him, nor to those who live in the same times with him, nor even to those who are of the Church upon earth; his fellowship in congregational worship is with all the members of Christ's holy catholic or true Church; not the mere Church of Rome, which assumes to itself exclusively the title of Catholic, but with the *universal true* Church; with holy men, and faithful soldiers and servants of Christ, of all ages, countries, and conditions, whether in the body or out of it. The very essence of public worship is its *Church character*; its being the worship not of individuals, but of the *Church*, of which the life is in the head, and the interest and safety of each member the common concern of the whole body. "Ye are come," says the Apostle to the Hebrews, "ye are come unto Mount Sion, into the city of the living

¹ Ephes. iv. 12.

God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels; to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant." With all these, with this great body, this high and holy company, the faithful Christian has fellowship in public worship. His act of public prayer, his open confession of his Saviour, his solemn appeal to the Father, in union with his brethren of the congregation, vindicates his claim to the privileges of this favoured family¹, and to membership in this glorious body. He comes to *God's house*; he comes to join *Christ's* brethren; he is found as a member of *Christ's* body, partaking of the spiritual life of the Head, and professing a common interest with all the members. He is in communion with his fellow Christians, he is in communion with Christ, he has the fellowship of the Holy Ghost, he shares, and humbly imitates, the love of God. Public prayer is the communion, not only of man with man, not only of the individual with the Church, but the communion of man, and of the Church itself, with God. These are the privileges and operations of public prayer. A real Christian cannot separate himself from it; he cannot be destitute of interest in it, and so satisfy himself with only private prayer. The congregation

¹ See Sermon III.

is part of the body of Christ. Separation from the body, is separation from the *head*. A solitary selfish Christian, unconnected with, and uninterested in, the common welfare and salvation, is a contradiction in terms. The Gospel cannot contemplate such a character; none such is acknowledged there: he has thousands who share his prayers, and whose prayers he desires. He has, with his brethren, a common interest in the sacraments, and in all the means of grace, and a common trust in the mercies of God, and the merits of the Redeemer. All must join in confessing the sins of the congregation, all in prayer for general pardon and assistance, all in thanksgiving for general blessings.

Can we be surprised, then, that St. Paul should be earnest in exhorting all the members of such a Church not to forsake "the assembling themselves together;" or that Jesus should give them the promise, that where two or three should be gathered together in His name, there He would be in the midst of them? No, a more reasonable counsel than that of the Apostle could not have been suggested; nor could a more gracious promise have been given by Jesus, to cherish the union of His Church, and to make them feel their mutual dependence, and their obligations to love one another. If grace and salvation be offered, and covenanted to the *Church of Christ*, what pretension then can that man have to the name of a Christian, who despises public worship, and forsakes the assembling of the

congregation? How can he, with any consistency, satisfy his conscience, and persuade himself that he belongs to the body of Christ's Church, when his acts show that he takes no interest in the general welfare of that Church? How can he expect that his *own* wants will be supplied, his own blessings continued, or his own sins forgiven, when he feels, or at least acts as though he felt, no concern in those of others; and chooses to stand aloof, in solitary and selfish indifference, from the other members of the spiritual body? How can he expect to be included in that Church, to which the unmerited mercies in Jesus are covenanted, if he cannot rejoice with the whole body when it rejoices in the prosperity of its members; nor suffer with it, when it suffers either generally, or in any of its members? This is one very important, though not often well considered, ground of the duty of public prayer; it is *social*, it is the act of the *society*, or *body*, of the Church. The man who refuses to take part in this social act of the body, appears to deny his connexion with it; shows that he has no sympathy with it, or, at least, refuses that manifestation of his sympathy, which the Church requires by the authority of its Head. Indeed, if he denies, in word or in deed, his connexion with the *body*, upon what pretence do the Scriptures warrant his claiming connexion with the *Head*? If he has no part with his brethren, how does he assure himself that he has part with Christ? If he shall not confess Christ before men,

will Christ acknowledge him before the holy angels?

Say not, therefore, brethren, I can pray at home as well as at church; you are directed to pray both at home and at church. The same Saviour who directed you to pray in private, also taught you that belong to a holy family, and are members of a spiritual body, and promised to be with that family when gathered together, His promise was not to the mere solitary worshipper, but to His *Church*; and that Church is as much dependent upon His mercy, and has as many blessings to thank Him for, as any of us individually. And every member of that Church, who refuses to pray for those mercies on the Church, and to return thanks to God for His benefits conferred on it, is just as perverse and ungrateful, as he who refuses to ask for what he personally needs, or to be thankful for what he has personally received at the hand of God.

“How harsh,” says Bishop Wilson, “would it sound to hear a man say, I have nothing to ask of God, I have nothing to thank Him for, I do not owe Him any service, I can live without His blessing, I desire not the knowledge of His ways! The most careless sinner would tremble to repeat these words; and yet this, in effect, is the language of those that wilfully neglect and despise the public worship of God; this is the language of their actions, though not of their tongue.

“Remember, good Christians, that, as such, you

all pretend to be *of the household of faith*. Now, can any of you, with any pretence say, that you are of the household of faith, when you are seldom or never seen at God's house, and with His family. Think seriously of this, and you will esteem it the greatest blessing to have churches to go to, and you will close with every opportunity of going to your Father's house, lest you lose the inheritance of his obedient and dutiful children."

Every man's heart will, on reading this appeal, at once acknowledge the reasonable and just grounds on which it puts the question of his attachment to that body, of which Christ is the head. The act of neglecting of social worship is an evidence of inconsistency with his Christian profession, which cannot be disputed. Although the constant attendance at public worship may not be always a proof of the sincerity or vitality of his faith, the habitual and wilful neglect of it is an undeniable one of his practical unbelief. Every Christian Church ordains its public ministrations upon the principle of every member communicating with the body. And the more closely we approach the purest and earliest periods of the Church, the more jealous do Christians appear to have been of this duty and privilege.

"Not one example," says Archbishop Potter, "of any *Christian* Church can be produced through the whole world, where the Sacraments were not administered, the Gospel preached, and the worship

of God celebrated in an open and public manner. Even in the sharpest persecutions, the Christian assemblies, though it may not be so openly as in times of peace, were constantly held and frequented: and whoever did not choose to endure the *most cruel death*, rather than *preserve* his life by *absenting* himself, was thought unworthy to be called a Christian."

SERMON XLVIII.

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS ON PUBLIC PRAYER.

THE PRAYER.

O God, our refuge and strength, who art the author of all godliness; Be ready, we beseech thee, to hear the devout prayers of thy Church; and grant, that those things, which we ask faithfully, we may obtain effectually, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

PSALM CXXXIV. 2.

LIFT UP YOUR HANDS IN THE SANCTUARY, AND BLESS THE LORD.

THIS counsel of the Psalmist directs us to the exercise of *public* prayer, used in the various senses, which, we observed¹, were comprehended under that term—petition, adoration, confession, and thanksgiving. The words require no explanation; but the exhortation, they convey, forms a suitable introduction to those general considerations on public worship, which I propose to touch upon in

¹ Sermon XLV.

this discourse. Our last Sermon regarded the subject principally in one point of view,—the obligations to public prayer arising out of the *social* principle, which prevails in it. We will now proceed to recommend the same duty on other grounds, and to make such remarks as we think likely to instruct and edify the members of families, and the Church generally, on so important a subject.

I. All prayer is due to God, as the Author, and Giver, of every good thing we have received, or desire. He it is who created and redeemed us; He bestows upon us all things “needful both for our souls and bodies;” He pardons our sins, and, by His Holy Spirit, enables us to walk in newness of life. It is but due to Him, that we should acknowledge His bounty, and our dependence, by asking what we need, and thanking Him for that we have received. But we need many things, have been guilty in many things, and have received many things which relate not only to ourselves individually, but also to us as *members* of a *body*, the Church of Christ. For these the voice of prayer, confession, and praise, should be lifted up not only in solitary devotion, but with one accord with our brethren in the congregation. This duty necessarily flows from the social principles of public prayer, as set forth in the preceding Sermon. And under this head I think it a fit place to draw attention to a subject, which I have elsewhere noticed, viz. the

grounds and the necessity, on which those, who are *unable* to give their *personal* attendance at public worship, should send to ask the *public* prayers of the congregation in their behalf; or those who have received the blessing prayed, should request the special and *public* thanks of their brethren to be offered up. The very social principle of prayer, by which, if one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it; also the direct injunction of God's Word, that we should require the prayers of the Church, are obvious reasons for this. But there is one reason, which is generally overlooked, and on which I here take leave to repeat the arguments I adduced in the Sunday Reader ¹.

“ We know that in ‘ *the prayer for all conditions of men,*’ the words ‘ especially those for whom our prayers are *desired,*’ are to be inserted when any person does *desire* the prayers of the congregation. Now we think that a weak and false shame has of late years prevailed, and caused many Christians to neglect this *duty* of *desiring* the prayers of the congregation. And we suspect also, that the *nature* of the *duty* is not sufficiently understood. We say the *duty*, for it is not only a privilege, but a *duty*, that we should request the prayers of the congregation. One great reason for which public worship was

¹ Vol. v. p. 390.

ordained, was, that it should be a *public manifestation of our faith and dependence upon God*. This we do by attending public worship, when health, and strength, and circumstances, permit. But when sickness, infirmity, or calamity prevent us from *thus manifesting, before the congregation*, that faith, and acknowledging that dependence, then the Church proposes to us another way of doing the same thing, viz. by sending our *names* to the *minister*, and requesting him to *desire* the prayers of the congregation in our behalf. By doing this we *proclaim* and *manifest* our faith in God—we *publicly avow*, by our *express request*, as at other times we do by our *presence*, that on Him we lean for support, and Him we acknowledge as the source of all we are, all we have, and all we hope for. And if at any time the soul should feel more deeply that faith and dependence, and more readiness and delight in avowing it—the hour of sickness, and pain, and calamity, is that time. Yet how few do thus *manifest* their *faith*—how often is it that *only the poor*, and but *few of them*, think of this duty—how many, too, do it by halves, and, instead of desiring their *name* to be *mentioned* to the congregation, say, that the prayers of the congregation are desired by ‘*a person afflicted*,’ &c. Oh, how false is this shame—this sheepish and cold confession of God! Is this the feeling of a follower of Christ? Would this have been the feeling of those who gloried in the name of Christ—not only re-

joiced in receiving and acknowledging his blessings, but cheerfully embraced reproach and mockery, shame and sufferings, for His sake? Surely, brethren, no man should be ashamed to confess his dependence upon God, at the very time, and in the very circumstances, in which he feels it most; and no man, who shrinks from avowing his dependence on God, can expect God's support. After *recovering* also from sickness, or *escape* from calamity, how few think of thus sending in their *name* to *return thanks*! Yet it is our *duty* so to do, and the neglect of it argues a very insufficient sense of our *obligations* to our Heavenly Father, of that public tribute of gratitude so justly due to Him, and so edifying to our fellow-worshippers. The same arguments as we have applied to the asking the prayers of the congregation, apply to returning public thanks. We have treated this subject in a *single* point of view, and one which we think is much overlooked. We know that we are enjoined in the Scriptures to ask the prayers of the Church, and to give public thanks; and that many other reasons, and good reasons, for it, are to be given. But as these have been dwelt upon by others, and the above has not, we have confined ourselves chiefly to that. However, we subjoin, from Dr. Comber, the following excellent general remarks on thanksgiving in the Church:—

“ (*Particularly to those who desire now to offer up their praises and thanksgivings for thy late mercies vouchsafed unto them.*)

“ ‘ We cannot pass this, so generally neglected, *parenthesis*, without a just complaint of the base ingratitude of this present age; wherein, though many desire the particular prayers of the Church to be made for them, in their sickness or danger; yet scarce any take care to return public thanks upon their recovery. The Church hath provided thanksgivings as well as prayers, and expects we should use the one (when God gives occasions) as well as the other; so that it is the fault of private men, if either of them be omitted. When our Lord Jesus had cured the ten lepers, though all received their desired health, yet none returned to give glory to God, but one poor *Samaritan* stranger, Luke xvii. 16, 17, 18. But now men are more negligent, for of many hundreds which do recover by the Church's prayers, we hear of not one that comes to make a just acknowledgment. Whether it be out of ingratitude or negligence, I will not determine; but whatever be the cause, I am sure the crime is very great. When the God of *Israel* had healed Naaman, he came back to confess the mercy he had received, and proffered large oblations, yea, and requested to have as much consecrated earth as might serve to build an altar within his own country, whereon he might particularly sacrifice to the true God for the health he had received. 2 Kings v. 15, &c.

“ ‘ For it was the custom of the very heathens, to come and offer sacrifices and gifts, and to pay their vows at the temples of those gods to whom

they had prayed, in the time of sickness or danger: *Strabo* mentioneth a famous temple of *Esculapius* at *Tetropolis*, a city of the *Ionians* and *Carians*, in which there were multitudes of sick and miserable petitioners, and the walls thereof were every where covered with painted tablets, in which were written the disease, and the name of the party which had been restored; the like also was done in the island of *Coos*, and elsewhere.

“ ‘ In like manner, those who were delivered from shipwreck, by praying unto *Neptune*, hung up their garments, like tablets in his temple, and paid their vows there; those poor *gentiles*, taking more care to do honour to their false gods than we Christians to the true. But if *heathen* examples will not shame us, let instances of Holy Scripture prevail with us; for, among the Jews, it was so constant and known a custom for all, upon their recovery, to go up to the temple, and give solemn thanks, that in the history of *Hezekiah's* sickness, the going up to the house of the Lord, is put to signify his recovery, *Isaiah xxxviii. 22. What shall be the sign, that I shall go up into the house of the Lord?* that is, what shall be the sign, that I shall recover, and, as usual, be able to go to the temple and make my acknowledgments? And the duty was approved by our Saviour and his apostles. The lame man, whom our Saviour cured at the pool of *Bethesda*, made first use of his legs to carry him to the Temple, to praise God, and there the Jews found him. He, also,

whose limbs were restored by the prayers of St. Peter and St. John, no sooner was able to stand up, but immediately he waited on the apostles, in the Temple, to praise God there, according to the pious use of his nation. Acts iii. 8. It were endless to relate how it was used, of the ancient Christians, and of our pious forefathers, to return thanks, and offer rich oblations, and distribute large alms, upon the receipt of such mercies, as we, in this irreligious generation, are wont to take no notice of at all. But yet, if we will amend, let us consider how we obscure the glory of God, disparage the prayers of the Church, and show ourselves unworthy of the mercy received, if we do not cause open thanks to be given for our deliverance. Let us observe how base a temper it shows, to be craving and importunate till we get a mercy, and when we have it, to regard him no more of whom we begged it. How shall it be known that God hath shown mercy, or that the prayers of the faithful prevailed? How shall any be encouraged to seek to God, or desire the Church's prayers hereafter, when the efficacy of both is smothered by thy vile ingratitude? We hear the petitions, but whether they be answered or no, we cannot tell, through the unworthiness of those for whom they are made.

“ ‘ They have many of them obtained their base end ; which was ease and health to enable them to serve the world, or the devil, as they did before ; and neither God, nor his Church, hear of them any more,

till another sickness do arrest them, which, when it comes to pass, it is very likely He will be deaf to their next intreaties, that was so little regarded for his former answers ; and they who do not give thanks for the first recovery, deserve never to be heard the second time. Let us imitate, therefore, the best examples, and consider how holy *David* did not only pray in sickness to be delivered ; but, when his prayers were heard, he made *psalms* on purpose, and gave them to the choir, to be sung openly in the temple, for his restoring to health : on which occasion, the 6th, and 116th, with some others, were written. We have a form made ready, the good Lord grant us a heart rightly disposed when we are delivered, and then we shall never neglect to pay our solemn acknowledgments to the glory of God, the encouragement of the Church, and the procuring relief for ourselves, whenever we relapse into like distress.' ”

II. All prayer is homage to God ; and as private prayer is private homage, so public prayer is public homage. And we are bound to offer this homage not only as a just tribute to God, but for the sake of the salvation of our fellow-creatures, and even for the happiness and welfare of civil society. On this point I shall lay before you the plain, forcible observations of an able divine¹, of whose assistance

¹ Seed.

I have before, in the course of these Sermons, availed myself.

“ Every creature ought to do homage to his Creator ; he ought to pay the tribute of honour, where honour is due. Now the honour of God is more promoted by his being worshipped publicly, than privately ; because private prayer is piety confined within our breasts ; but public prayer is piety exemplified and displayed in our outward actions : it is the beauty of holiness made visible ; our *light shines* out before men, and in the eye of the world ; it enlarges the interests of godliness, and keeps up a face and sense of religion among mankind. Were men only to repair to their devotion, as the disciple o quality did to his Lord and Master, secretly and by night, for fear of the Jews ; religion, thus lonely and unfriended, would soon decay for want of public countenance and encouragement. For, what would be the consequence, if religion sought the shades, and lived a recluse entirely immured in closets ; while irreligion audaciously appears abroad, *like the pestilence that destroyeth at noon day* ? It requires no great depth of penetration to perceive, nor expense of argument to prove, that the want of a public national religion, or a general absenting from that national religion, must end in a general national irreverence to the Deity ; and an irreverence to the Deity in an universal dissolution of morals, and all the *overflowings of ungodliness*. The Service of the Church, and the Word of God read and ex-

pounded, must awaken those reflections, which it is the business of bad men to lay fast asleep, and let in upon the soul some unwelcome beams of light : but, when these constant calls to virtue are neglected, men will become gradually more and more estranged from all seriousness and goodness ; till at last they end in a professed disregard to all fixed principles. The fear of that Being, whose judgments no power can fence off, no skill elude, being absolutely necessary, it is the duty of every man, not only to cultivate this reverence in himself, but to promote it as far as he can in others. Now he, that would promote a sacred regard to the Deity, must do it by such actions as are most significant of that regard : he must express and exemplify to others, that awful serious sense of the Deity, which is impressed upon his own mind, by a solemn and avowed acknowledgment of his power and glory in assemblies set apart for that purpose. Whoever thinks justly, must be sensible, that *private* religion never *did* in *fact* subsist, but where some *public* profession of it was regularly kept up. He must be sensible, that if public worship were once discontinued, an universal forgetfulness of that God would ensue, whom to remember is the strongest fence and preservative against vice : and that the bulk of mankind would soon degenerate into mere savages and barbarians, if there were not stated days to call them off from the common business of life, to attend to what is the *most* important business of all, their

salvation in the next. But I need not labour this point, since it is allowed even by those who are declared enemies to religion. They look upon religion, and public worship, as a political engine, to awe the common herd into a sense of their duty, not founded on reason, yet necessary to the good of mankind. How absurd this scheme is, may easily be shown: for if they do not admit the existence of the Deity, they may be without much difficulty confuted, the existence of God being one of the most obvious truths. But if they do admit it, they must grant likewise, that an infinitely good Being must will whatever is for the good of his creatures; and consequently religion, and public worship, which they own to be conducive to the good of mankind, must be his will: but, what is the will of the Deity, must be founded on truth and reason. What is *necessary* to the *public* happiness, is *therefore* true. For though *our private* interest, and truth, may not always coincide, yet there is always a strict correspondence, harmony, and alliance, between truth and the general happiness."

III. The duty is enjoined by positive precept in the Word of God, and its obligation testified and sanctioned by the continued practice, and authority, of the Church, in every age down to the present time. "Lift up," said David, "your hands in the sanctuary, and bless the Lord."—"When two or three are gathered together in my name, there,"

declared the Lord Himself, "am I in the midst of them."—"Not forsaking the assembling of yourselves together," is the counsel of St. Paul. The Church has never been without public worship, though at first compelled to meet in upper rooms, and sometimes in caves, sometimes in the midnight hour. Yet the sacraments, and the public worship of the Church, never were allowed to fail. The "fellowship" of Christians continued to be manifested "in the breaking of bread, and in prayer." The voice of supplication, and the hymn of praise, arose in defiance of the yells of insult and persecution, and sank not at the approach of torture, or of death itself. No excuses were admitted, no separation from the public worship allowed or claimed.

Indeed, had there been no direct precept, no clear evidence of the practice of public worship among the first Christians, the necessity of it might have been inferred from the very nature of Christianity. Our religion is not a mere profession of a severer or more perfect morality; neither, though a religion of motives, is it a religion *only* of motives to holiness and safety: it is a religion of *means*, as well as motives. It offers the means, and the only means of salvation. Whereas, through the weakness of our mortal nature and our corruption, we cannot of ourselves turn to God, He ordains means of grace, through which we shall be aided by the all-sufficient power of the Spirit. The very essence of Christianity is faith—a belief, that we are all

guilty sinners, all condemned in the sight of God, all given over to death, and redeemed only by the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. His *Church* is set before us, as the ark into which we are to take refuge from the universal destruction that threatens us. We believe that it is our only safety, and that, cast off from it, we perish. By baptism we are admitted into it; and "the same reasons," observes the author before quoted¹, "that oblige us to be *admitted* into the Church by baptism, lay us under a necessity of *continuing* in a constant *communion* with it: for by forsaking this *communion*, we forfeit those privileges, to which our admission into the Church gives us a title. The Church is called *the body of Christ*; and a member, when cut off from the body of Christ, must lose those vital influences, which were imparted to it from the Head; *as not holding the Head, from which all the body*, by joints and bands, having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God. Whatever pretensions to morality we may make, we are cut off from all those graces and *benefits*, here and hereafter, which are to be had by *virtue* of that union². As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself,

¹ Seed.

² "Where the Church is, there also is the Spirit of God."—IRENÆUS.

"He cannot have God as his father, who has not the Church as his mother."—CYPRIAN.

except it abide in the vine ; no more can we, *except we abide in Christ*. By refusing to associate with any body of Christians, and to partake of those ordinances by which we have a fellowship with Christ, we relapse into a state of *nature*, and have no *covenanted* title to that salvation, which is the gift of God *through* the merits of *Jesus Christ*."

IV. It is another, and no mean inducement to our joining in public worship, that there we offer up our prayers, praises, and thanksgivings, through the ministrations of *that priesthood, whom God has appointed to feed His flock*, and "to declare and pronounce to his people, being penitent, the absolution and remission of their sins." It cannot be doubted, that He, who appointed a ministry, who promised to be with them even to the end of the world, and has continued their commission, in unbroken succession, down to this day, will not be wanting to bless both their ministrations, and the service of those who manifest their Church-unity and their faith, and their love of the Lord of the Church, by reverently and fervently working in prayer and praise, with His messengers.

Lastly. Here, in this favoured land, we may add to all other reasons and encouragement, the advantage of a sublime, beautiful, and edifying Liturgy, drawn up in our native tongue, prepared with repeated prayer, with profound knowledge, deep

devotion, careful study of early liturgies, and frequent revision and discussion, at distant intervals¹. In one peculiarity public prayer differs from private, that it *must* be *joint* prayer, it must be the act of the *whole congregation*, it cannot be mental prayer, it must be expressed in a *form of words*; and for that purpose a sounder and better form of words cannot be devised than our Liturgy.

“ The several portions of Morning and Evening Prayer are not put together without plan, or connexion; they lead one to another in skilful and edifying arrangement. The devout offices of the worshipper rise by it, as the angels of God ascended by the mystic ladder in Jacob’s vision, from earth to heaven. One step leads to another, till the humble Christian is conducted from the lower and earthy region of fear and sorrow, confession and penitence, to the heavenly visions of faith and hope. He advances to the foot of the throne of grace—he approaches the Holy of Holies, sprinkled with the blood of the all-sufficient sacrifice—he lifts the veil that was interposed between fallen man and the mercy-seat, and, in full assurance, raises up his eyes to Him that sitteth thereon, amid the cherubim and powers of Heaven. He makes known his requests to God, and, finally, breaks forth, with the Church of Christ, in which are united all saints, and even the holy angels, in praise and thanksgiving². ”

¹ See Sunday Reader, vol. v. p. 153 and 186.

² Ibid. p. 84.

After these appropriate exercises of faith and piety, after having invoked the blessing, and acknowledged the sovereignty of the Most High, and after having been in His temple, and through His appointed means sought the dew of His favour, and the grace of the Holy Spirit, how fitly will the hearts of the congregation be prepared to hear with humility, and with advantage, the exhortations and instruction of His ministers, and carry them into effect in their practice, to the edification and adorning of Christ's Church, to the happiness and advantage of the community, to the peace and purity of our firesides, and to the salvation of their own souls ! Go then, Christian ; go with thy brethren, united in heart and voice : " Lift up your hands in the sanctuary, and bless the Lord."

SERMON XLIX.

FAMILY PRAYER.

THE PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY and everlasting God, who dost govern all things in heaven and earth ; Mercifully hear the supplications of thy people, and grant us thy peace all the days of our life, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

COLOSS. iv. 2.

CONTINUE IN PRAYER, AND WATCH IN THE SAME WITH
THANKSGIVING.

THE text comes nearer than any passage, with which I am acquainted, to an express and *positive* direction to practise family prayer. For it occurs in the midst of a series of counsels, and rules, given by St. Paul, for the government, and conduct, of *families* ; and it immediately follows his injunctions to masters, to do their duty to their families and dependants, with a special view to the *Master in heaven*, to whose household all belongs, and whom all are to glorify. This situation of the passage in the text you will see, by referring to the place in your Bible,

and reading from the fifteenth verse of the third chapter of the Epistle to the Colossians to the end of the fourth verse in the fourth chapter. Any person so doing cannot fail to observe, that the text is a portion of instructions for the conduct of private families ; and, as such, it can hardly be understood in any other sense than as a direct precept to practise the duty of family prayer.

I have said that the passage comes nearer than any, that I know, to such a precept ; for I do not think that there are in Scripture any *formal* precepts, nor indeed any *clear* and *unquestionable* examples of the practice of family prayer, properly so called. The text is rather, perhaps, an *exhortation* to do what every man's own sense and conscience would convince him, without any formal rule being laid down, was his *duty*, than a precept to inform him of what he did not know, or to give him a commandment as authority on a subject, on which the least doubt could exist. And the *examples* of prayer being offered in families, are generally, and, as far as I know, universally open to this *question*, whether they were not prayers, not only of the private family, but also of the congregation¹ there

¹ In the recorded instances of patriarchal ministrations, the father acted in a more public capacity than that which is now understood by a master of a private family reading daily prayers ; for the family was then the *Church*, and the patriarch on those occasions recorded seems to have rather acted as priest or prophet to the tribe or family, than as master of a private household.

assembled, before the infant Church was in a condition to provide its own public buildings for that purpose. I do not affirm, nor do I think, that this was always the case; but all the examples I have noticed seem not related in terms sufficiently precise to preclude the raising of a *question* upon the point.

And it does not appear to be of the least importance that we should have such positive precepts, or such precise examples. For the duty of family prayer, without them, rests upon a *general* basis sufficiently strong, both in Scripture and reason.

The text alone, addressed, as we have observed, to masters of families, though not mentioning family prayer in so many words, yet may be considered as decisive evidence, that both St. Paul, and those whom he addressed, were convinced of its use and necessity. Moreover, the *universality* of the duty of prayer in general, its uses, and the obligations to offer it at *all* times, and in *all* circumstances, is frequently and earnestly dwelt upon; and must, of course, among those times and circumstances, *comprehend the times, and circumstances, in which families, as well as individuals, should pray.* “Pray without *ceasing*,” said our apostle to the Thessalonians, “in *every thing* give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you¹.” And again, “continuing instant in prayer².” And to

¹ 1 Thess. v. 17, 18.

² Rom. xii. 12.

Timothy he says, "I will therefore that men pray *every where*, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting¹." If it be thus required in *all* cases, who will dare except families from the range of this universal duty; and the more especially when the deductions of reason and common sense lead us to the same conviction, and show that the all-important ends, for which the Gospel was revealed to us by our Heavenly Father, are greatly and manifestly promoted by this holy exercise?

To point out some instances of this, and to make a few remarks upon some of the obstacles and excuses by which the neglect of family prayer is sought to be justified, or which have prevented well-inclined persons from practising it, will occupy the remainder of this Sermon.

I. The first effect of family prayer, which I may point out as both obvious and important, is the promotion of family holiness, and of those graces and virtues, and that conduct, which cannot fail to maintain peace, harmony, order, and purity in the domestic circle. Respecting the great influence of family holiness, you must be again referred to preceding Sermons² of this work; but I will here add a few remarks on the tendency of family prayer to promote the happiness and welfare of our household. In family prayer, the head of it, before his wife and

¹ 1 Tim. xi. 8.

² Especially Sermon XX.

children, servants, and all connected with his household, displays, every morning and evening, an *example* of religion, which they will naturally be inclined to copy, and which will add weight to his instructions and admonitions. "It is not difficult to convince men of the reasonableness of prayer; all the difficulty lies in engaging them to the practice of it. And as long as a desire of imitation is confessedly a strong principle of action, one bright domestic *pattern* in a person of superior character and authority, showing such a distinguished regard to the Deity, that morning and evening come not more constantly in their course, than his stated hours of calling his family to devotion, will have more effect upon all beneath him and about him, than a thousand dry *instructions* without it, which will operate but faintly, in comparison. By the one, you only point out their duty; but by the other (joining with them in prayer) you call it forth into action, you help to raise a grovelling and low thoughted soul, which before was cleaving to the dust. By so often seeing the conspicuous lustre of your goodness, they will be led to the approving it; and from approving, to imitate it; and from imitating it, to be *not only almost, but altogether*, such as you are¹."

At the same time the master of a family, by this practice, is gradually establishing a *habit* of piety, which will grow, and be daily strengthened. And,

¹ Seed.

the more strength it acquires, the better will the duties of that household be performed, and the more generally will its purity and peace be maintained. A deeper reverence too, and a more rational and fervent love of the head of the family, will arise in their minds, from their looking up to him, as their guide and companion in this intercourse with God. The children, the servants, all connected with the head of a household, who begins and ends the day by joining them in prayer to their common Father and Redeemer, will obey him well, and will do their duty to each other well. They will abundantly bring forth the fruits of righteousness and peace; because, whatsoever they do, this practice teaches them to do it to God, not unto man, and in the name of the Lord Jesus.

“ A good man,” says Skelton, “ can never think himself in a more honourable or happy situation, than while he is on his knees in the midst of his family, uttering the devotions of himself, his dear wife and children, and his dutiful domestics. He has before him, at that delightful juncture, all the occasions of happiness, that God has given him; and is then employed in adoring the Giver, and blessing his benefactor. There is a transport of joy in this most tender act of worship, which none but a worthy and a great soul can feel; and which the libertine, in his keenest moment of sensual pleasure, has reason to envy. What is it, then, that raises such a coldness to this, above all other

kinds of worship? Surely it must be a want of religion and goodness, a want of love and reverence for God. He that neglects this duty, and is unacquainted with the pleasure that is to be found in the performance of it, may profess his faith as loudly as he pleases, and take it very ill to be called an unbeliever; yet how does his faith appear? What fruits, what proof, can he show of it, when it cannot produce an action like this, in which it is assisted with such an high and exquisite enjoyment?"

Again: the *social* principle of prayer prevails in family as well as in public prayer, and even in a still stronger degree. What we stated, the increased intensity, and power, of our love of each other, accordingly as the range of the circle in which that love acted, was diminished, applies also to the social interest we take in family prayer. In public prayer that *social* feeling of interest in the wants, and blessings, in which we have a common concern with those with whom we pray, comprehends a larger number; and therefore is practically not felt so strongly as when it becomes concentrated in the smaller circle of our family. Can we, then, for a moment, imagine, that we are neither to feel, nor to manifest to each other this common sense of mutual interest in family prayer—that, while we are to join the body of the Church with one accord, we are not to join those who are so *near*, and so *dear* to us, in prayer for the things that concern *them*? Our com-

mon wants, our common weakness, our common guilt, our common duty, our common obligations, our common faith, and common hopes, all demand it. If, in a *temporal* point of view, we cannot doubt the justice of St. Paul's declaration, that, "if any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel;" how much more forcibly must the reproach, conveyed in that declaration, apply to the neglect of making *spiritual* provision for those of his own house! How completely infidel must be that man's indifference, who is regardless of the spiritual welfare of his family, and who cannot feel any sympathy with them in their acts of prayer and praise, nor in the common dangers and necessities, hopes and fears, joys and griefs, to which those acts relate!

The last reason which I shall here state for the practice of family prayer, is, that it is a means of drawing down God's favour and blessing on that family, and on all that belong to it. "*Ask*, and ye shall receive," is the universal rule. As private prayer is necessary for private blessings, public prayer for public blessings, so is family prayer for family blessings. He that made the promise to prayer generally, will not be wanting to fulfil it to family prayer. And family prayer, as well as other prayer, has in its very act a tendency to accomplish the lawful objects of prayer. The Spirit of holiness and peace will shed its precious influence over the

master, and his assembled worshippers. Religion will enter in and dwell in that family, bringing with her the graces that wait upon her—love, joy, peace, gentleness, integrity, diligence, cheerfulness, and purity.

And what are the pretexts and excuses on which the neglect of this important and most profitable duty is palliated? Flimsy and vain as such excuses are, they prevail, unhappily, to such an extent, that we must endeavour to show their emptiness, and the sin of yielding to them. It is not their intrinsic weight that gives the power, but the indolence, and the want of thought, of those who yield to them.

One excuse is, that a convenient time cannot be found for it. If any of my readers urge such a plea, let me ask them this question; would they, on the day of judgment, under the searching eye of the all-seeing God, venture on such a plea? Would they, if then condemned and found wanting in the works of the Spirit, because they had not sought Him, as directed by the Word of God, in prayer, would they think of excusing themselves in the sight of God, by saying, I could not find time convenient to ask for that, which was so indispensably needful for my salvation? Would they dare to offer a plea so audacious, and (if to such an awful subject the term could be applied) so ridiculous? Know, brethren, that there is a time for all things; and that, if there were not, you are bound, at any inconvenience, or any sacrifice whatsoever, to find time for *God* and *your souls*—this is the *one thing needful*.

But, in truth, there is no inconvenience or sacrifice in the case. What inconvenience or sacrifice can there be in the master, (or, in *his absence*, some member of the family,) before he sits down to his breakfast, kneeling a short time, and praying with his servants, and those of his family who are ready; and doing the same at the hour at which his servants retire to rest? The plea is nothing but the delusive pretence of indolence, indifference, or love of pleasure. I cannot scruple to speak thus of it, for I speak from experience. My own family is numerous, and my hours generally occupied from morning to night in the discharge of public and private duties; but I have never found the *least difficulty* in allotting time to family prayer. The only difficulty I can conceive, is that of making a beginning: that once done, you will not feel inclined to discontinue a practice, of which you both see and feel the pleasantness and advantage. You may feel, perhaps, a little timidity at first, but a single day's effort will conquer that; and were it to require a greater exertion, no man, who thinks at all, will suppose that he may, from bashfulness or weak fear, abandon his Christian duty. Neither need you be at any loss for words; there are abundance of excellent publications for this purpose, and, not so much for the purpose of recommending one in particular above others, as by way of avoiding the embarrassment of choice to any person who may be induced, by these remarks, to begin the

practice of family prayer, I mention a very cheap and useful manual, by the present Bishop of London¹, and circulated by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge.

Another obstacle to the practice of family prayer is the fear of being thought *hypocritical*, or *over religious*. If there were any ground for this fear, it would be a bad reason for neglecting your duty. Your own conscience and your God should be the sole judges of your motives; and to shrink from what you are convinced is right, because you fear man's judgment, is as base and foolish, as it is wicked and dangerous. But at present there is not the slightest ground for this unreasonable fear. There is now, whatsoever might have been the case, nothing *singular* in family prayer; it is a *general* practice; comparatively few well-regulated families are without it; and the singularity is rather in the neglect, than in the observance of it. And I will add, from my own experience, that you will find your family and servants not only ready to acquiesce in your regulations respecting it, but evincing their satisfaction in it, and showing their sense of its advantages and comforts.

Let not your previous neglect of this wholesome and holy practice, stand in the way of your amending your error. Do not let the fear of your household wondering at, or censuring, your not having

¹ Blomfield's Manual of Family Prayer, price (to the public) 1½d.

begun before, scare you from beginning now. If such remarks do occur, they will pass away with the very first day of their occurrence, and are too futile and unimportant to deserve a moment's consideration. Every master had a time when he *began* to do what is right in this respect: the sooner you begin to do so the better; for wrong doing will not be palliated by persevering in it; and it will be wiser and safer to encounter the momentary criticism of man, than to continue under the abiding censure, and to defy the terrible wrath of God. I will conclude this discourse with the impressive admonition of Skelton.

“Upon the whole of this matter, let every master thus question with himself: is it not for great ends and reasons that God has placed me at the head of a family? Am I not accountable to Him for the discharge of this important office? Do not the future welfare of my children and servants depend very much upon the education they receive from me? If I do not instruct them in the principles of religion, and breed them up to virtue, where shall they get instruction? Is there any thing dearer to me than those who work for me, and depend on me? Can there be a greater crime than to neglect and defraud their very souls? Does not the providence of God govern the world? Is not God the founder and preserver of societies, and of families in particular? Can they subsist without religion? Shall I then suffer my family to want religion? Shall I

not rather take particular care that my house serve God by daily prayer? Can any thing I do be so useful to us, as to worship Him on whom we entirely depend? Can any thing be more agreeable than to serve and praise Him, to whom we are so infinitely indebted? Shall my own idleness, or the scoffs of libertines, deprive us of so great a benefit and pleasure, and force me, like an atheist, ungratefully and impiously to shut out God from my family, to entail ignorance and contempt of God's worship on all my posterity and dependents? Shall I put my trust in my own endeavours? Shall I build my hopes upon the sand of this world, and forsake *the rock of my salvation*, when I do plainly perceive the duty, the necessity, and the power of prayer? No, like the righteous *Job*, *I will continually sanctify my family*, that God may, as He did to him, *make an hedge about me and my house, and about all that I have on every side. We will seek His strength* in the time of trouble; in all our troubles, in all our trials, will we rely on it, and in our prosperity praise Him with pure lips and joyful hearts. *Evening, and morning, and at noon, will we pray, and cry aloud, and He shall hear our voice."*

SERMON L.

ON KEEPING HOLY THE SEVENTH DAY.

GEN. ii. 3.

GOD BLESSED THE SEVENTH DAY AND SANCTIFIED IT.

WHEN God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it as recorded in the text, He laid down a rule which has never been lost sight of in His Church, and which was dictated not less by mercy than by wisdom. He knew, and He desired, what was necessary to man's welfare both bodily and spiritual, both temporal and eternal. With a view to the promotion of these, He laid down the rule that *one* day out of *seven* should be kept holy, and devoted to repose from toil and care—to the peaceful and soothing offices of religious communion—and to the grateful offering of prayer and praise. In this light I wish to consider the Sabbath in the present discourse. I do not desire to enter into curious questions respecting the changes that may have been

made respecting the particular day in the seven by God's authority, or by His Church under His commission. One broad principle appears to me clear and undeniable—namely, that God did set apart one day out of seven; and though, under the Christian dispensation, and as some think on the giving of the law by Moses, the particular day might be changed, the *principle* of setting apart some day, and the *proportion* of one day out of seven, never were abandoned. And the change of the day itself was effected only under the authority of the Church, vested in persons acting by the special and extraordinary direction of God. Whether, as under the Jewish dispensation, it were the last day of the week, or, as under the Christian dispensation, it be the first day of the week, still one day in seven is appropriated to God, and to repose. And therein appears most conspicuously the wisdom and the goodness of God who so ordained it. This may be shown in the fitness of the ordinance for the maintenance of religion, and in its adaptation to the necessities and happiness of man.

It seems absolutely necessary for the preservation and exercise of religion, that some time should be set apart for its public and social action. And if the exact proportion which should be appropriated to that purpose had been left uncertain, or not established upon an authority which none could question, there could scarcely have been obtained that universal consent which is requisite in a matter

of such universal concern. The settlement of such a point was of an importance not inferior to that of any work of the Almighty. And, accordingly, we find Him, as soon as He had called man into being, and provided him with the means of existence, turning His first care to the appointment of the Sabbath. And He enforces the obligations to the observance of it, not only by authority, but by love. Under each dispensation, under the Patriarchs, under the Law, and under the Gospel, He connects the inducements to observe the Sabbath with some memorial of His goodness and mercy, peculiar to each, and calculated to conciliate the affection and respect of those especially addressed. Thus it becomes, as Ezekiel has described it, *a sign* between the Lord and His creatures, that they might be continually reminded that He is their God. To the Patriarchs it was a sign, reminding them that He *created* them and *gave them all* that was necessary for their life. To the Jews it was a sign, reminding them that He was not only their Creator, but their *deliverer* from *Egyptian bondage*. And to us the seventh day, being the LORD'S DAY, or the first day of the week, when Jesus rose triumphant from the dead, is a sign, reminding us not only of God's mercy in creation, and in the deliverance of His chosen people, but of the consummation of all—the *redemption of fallen man by Him, who "died for our sins, and rose again for our justification."*

If the first Sabbath commemorated the *creation*

of man, the Lord's day commemorates the same, and moreover his *regeneration*, his *spiritual* birth, not merely to life, but to the covenanted assurance of *immortality*. If the Jewish Sabbath commemorated also the deliverance of God's chosen people from Egyptian bondage, the Lord's day does more ; it also commemorates the deliverance of the faithful, by *Christ our Passover*, from worse than Egyptian bondage—from even *sin and death*. As on their Sabbath day they commemorated that rest which they had when they had quitted the land of their oppression, and been rescued from the grasp of their oppressors, so we remember, on the Lord's day, that Christ, "*the first fruits*," came forth from the grave: "*Death hath no more dominion over him*," and in His victory we behold our own—as promised by the voice of ancient and true prophecy—"I will ransom thee from the power of the grave ; I will redeem thee from death : O death, I will be thy plagues ; O grave, I will be thy destruction¹." These things, so full of hope and joy, so calculated to inspire perseverance and diligence in our Christian course, are set before us by that sign which every seventh day, by the Lord's appointment, presents to us.

But, besides these great mercies and privileges which it brings to our recollection, how admirably are those offices, and those acts of adoration of

¹ Hosea xiii. 14.

God, which are comprehended under the hallowing, or keeping holy the day, calculated to strengthen our faith, to promote our growth in wisdom and in grace, and our increase in the love of God and of our fellow creatures.

We are directed by the Church, and by our own sense of what is the proper and reasonable mode of hallowing the Lord's day, to resort to God's temple, and employ ourselves in the prayers and ministrations appointed for our edification. There, as we stated in a preceding discourse, we hear from the mouth of God's ministers His word and will—we are reminded of our guilt and unworthiness—we are led to confess our sinfulness—to pray for the mercy and grace of God—we are reminded also of His unwearied love and goodness, and join in the exercise of praise and thanksgiving. We occupy ourselves in those acts of devotion which will best incline us, and we receive that promised aid which will best enable us, to *carry into effect* the lessons of duty which we hear. If we enter into the services of the day with seriousness, and with a due sense of that great and merciful God, of our connexion with whom the seventh day is His appointed sign, we cannot fail to profit greatly by such an exercise. We must come out of the Church better men than when we entered into it, and we shall carry from it a spirit and disposition which will be a blessing to ourselves and to the society of which we are members.

Nor must we lose sight here of the beneficial tendency of the social character of public worship, which I have already described.

Here we assemble as a body reminded of our holy union not only with the Head, but with all the members. Here this body truly acts as such. Here it displays its unity of spirit in unity of action. It is what the reformers of our Church well called *Common Prayer*. It is the worship of brethren of the universal family offered to their common Father. It is the confession of sinners under one common sense of guilt and unworthiness. It is the prayer of fallen and weak creatures under one common necessity. It is the praise of the receivers of one common grace and bounty; all that is there heard, said, and done, reminds them of their joint hopes, fears, and interests, and inculcates the same lesson, "Sirs, ye are brethren." Love the brethren. As God so loved us, let us love one another. Let no master of a family, no member of it, as he desires unity and holiness, diligence and peace, justice and purity, kindness and joy, man's esteem and God's favour, to prevail in that family; let none, I say, himself neglect, or teach others to despise, the offices and obligation of the sacred seventh day. For the Lord has blessed it, and those that hallow it will find that it is indeed a sign to them, whether they be nations, or families, or individuals, that He is their God—gracious, true, and bounteous—honouring those that honour Him—and requiring from

all His creatures no other obedience than that which leads to their happiness and safety. It is truly the Lord's day,—a day in all its offices, all its purposes, reminding us of His love who *careth for us*, who died for our sins, rose again for our justification, and yet liveth to make intercession for us.

Indeed, this merciful intention and use of the Sabbath is to be discovered not only in its effect upon our spiritual relations, and our dispositions, and general conduct, but also over our mere bodily health and comfort. But as upon this point the testimony of a physician may have more weight; the following observations of Dr. Farre given before a committee of the House of Commons, will be read with deep interest by every reflecting man :—

“ I have been in the habit during a great many years of considering the *uses* of the Sabbath, and of observing its *abuses*. The abuses are chiefly manifested in labour and dissipation. The use, medically speaking, is that of a day of rest. In a theological sense it is a holy rest, providing for the introduction of new and sublimer ideas into the mind of man, preparing him for his future state. As a day of rest, I view it as a day of compensation for the inadequate restorative power of the body under continued labour and excitement. A physician always has respect to the preservation of the restorative power, because if once this be lost, his healing office is at an end. If I show you, from the physiological view of the question, that there

are provisions in the laws of nature which correspond with the Divine commandment, you will see from the analogy, that "the Sabbath was made for man" as a necessary appointment. A physician is anxious to preserve the balance of circulation, as necessary to the restorative power of the body. The ordinary exertions of man *run down* the circulation every day of his life ; and the first general law of nature by which God (who is not only the giver, but also the preserver and sustainer, of life) prevents man from destroying himself, is the alternating of day with night, that repose may succeed action. But although the night apparently equalizes the circulation well, yet it does not sufficiently restore its balance for the attainment of a long life. Hence once day in seven, by the bounty of Providence, is thrown in as a day of compensation, to perfect by its repose the animal system. You may easily determine this question, as a matter of fact, by trying it on beasts of burden. Take that fine animal, the horse, and work him to the full extent of his powers every day in the week, or give him rest one day in seven, and you will soon perceive, by the superior vigour with which he performs his functions on the other six days, that this rest is necessary to his well-being. Man, possessing a superior nature, is borne along by the very vigour of his mind, so that the injury of *continued* diurnal exertion and excitement on his animal system is not so immediately apparent as it is in the brute ;

but in the long-run he breaks down more suddenly: it abridges the length of his life and that vigour of his old age, which (as to mere animal power) ought to be the object of his preservation. I consider, therefore, that, in the bountiful provision of Providence for the preservation of human life, the sabbatical appointment is not, as it has been sometimes theologically viewed, simply a precept partaking of the nature of a political institution, but that it is to be numbered amongst the natural duties, if the preservation of life be admitted to be a duty, and the premature destruction of it a suicidal act. This is said simply as a physician, and without reference at all to the theological question: but if you consider further the proper effect of real Christianity, namely, peace of mind, confiding trust in God, and good-will to man, you will perceive in this source of renewed vigour to the mind, and through the mind to the body, an additional spring of life imparted from this higher use of the Sabbath as a holy rest. Were I to pursue this part of the question, I should be touching on the duties committed to the clergy; but this I will say, that researches in physiology, by the analogy of the working of Providence in nature, will establish the truth of Revelation, and consequently show that the Divine commandment is not to be considered as an arbitrary enactment, but as an appointment necessary to man. This is the position in which I would place it, as contradistinguished from precept

and legislation ; I would point out the sabbatical rest as necessary to man, and that the great enemies of the Sabbath, and consequently the enemies of man, are all laborious exercises of the body or mind, and dissipation, which force the circulation on that day in which it should repose ; whilst relaxation from the ordinary cares of life, the enjoyment of this repose in the bosom of one's family, with the religious studies and duties which the day enjoins, not one of which, if rightly exercised, tends to abridge life, constitute the beneficial and appropriate service of the day. The student of nature, in becoming the student of Christ, will find in the principles of his doctrine and law, and in the practical application of them, the only and perfect science which prolongs the present, and perfects the future life."

This is the evidence of a physician ; and how complete is the exposure which it makes of the folly or wickedness of those who would lead any man, and especially the poor man, to believe, that those who would promote the religious observance of the Sabbath, are enemies either to his welfare or his enjoyment. Nothing can be more unjust, or more ungrateful, than such a calumny. There may be difference of opinion as to the means by which such observance should be promoted : but as to the beneficial effect of it, there can be none among sincere Christians. And of all men, the poor man is most interested in the general observance of that

holy day of rest. It is especially *his* day, it is his privilege, which he ought to guard with the utmost jealousy, even if he were swayed by no higher motive than worldly enjoyment and bodily health. The same wisdom and goodness which caused the Gospel to be preached to the poor, secured for the toil-worn labourer the blessed rest of the Sabbath. The more that day shall be despised, the more he will suffer in his bodily, as well as his spiritual, health and comforts. He ought to be its most jealous guardian—he ought to be amongst the most eager to prevent its sanctity from being despised. It is his best protection against being prematurely ground to dust by the merciless exactions of avarice and worldly greediness; which, if the Sabbath were to lose its hold upon the consciences of mankind in general, would give him no rest from his toil, till premature death should put an end to him, and his sufferings, together.

To return, however, to those general considerations on the usefulness and merciful tendency of the ordinance of the seventh day, which are not connected with our mere bodily labour and health, it may not be amiss, before we conclude this discourse, not only to speak of the benefits of observing the Lord's day, but also to glance at the consequences of neglecting it.

We have spoken of the Sabbath in the light in which Ezekiel describes it; as a sign, to those who observe it, that the Lord is God. But will it not

be a *sign* that the Lord is their God to those also who shall *not* observe it. Yes, brethren, it will be such a sign—but a sign, not of mercy, but of wrath and vengeance. It will be a memorial, a weekly record, accumulating against their souls a weekly increasing account of ingratitude, rebellion, and impiety! God, mocked and dishonoured, will despise and reject them. The Holy Spirit will withdraw His influence from those who audaciously refuse to seek His aid through those means which He has ordained. Jesus will not be “in the midst of them,” who disdain to come together with one accord with His brethren in the house of their heavenly Father. They will be left to their reprobate hearts to heap up for themselves wrath, and tribulation, and anguish.

Nay, will not the very habits, practices, and company, to which the breach of the Sabbath by its own operation leads, tend to bring on these terrible consummations? If the man will not adopt the period fixed by God, what stated time will he take? And if he has no stated time, will he not continually put off the time for worshipping God to a season which, like Felix’s “convenient season,” will never come? Will he not lose the habit of causing God to dwell in his heart and thoughts, and leave them empty and ready for the reception of the evil one? Will not the company, to which he will be led, be that of those of the same habits with himself? And what will be the lessons and

examples he will, as a matter of course, meet with from such companions—lessons of holiness, or lessons of wickedness and ungodliness? Any person of common sense can answer these questions but in one way. It is, indeed, a matter of not only general remark, but of too awfully established notoriety, that there is no beginning of crime so common as that of Sabbath-breaking. It is placed upon record, in documents, and under circumstances, in which the evidence is conclusive and unquestionable. It appears, not only in examinations undertaken by the legislature, but in dying confessions of those wretched beings who have terminated a career of crime and atrocity under the hands of the public executioner, and have, with their last breath, as an atonement to the community, warned the spectators to shun the rock on which they split. They have been able to date their commencement of crime, and to trace their destruction, to neglect of the Lord's day.

Hear, therefore, and beware. Reverence God's ordinances—the practice of holy men—the injunctions of the Church. Listen to the invitations of Divine mercy and love, and to the counsels of infinite wisdom. Hear the testimony of reason, of history, of experience. And be not heedless of the terrible examples of those who, like the fragments of wreck, warn others to beware of the course which led them to perdition.

These all unite in one voice calling on us to

hallow the seventh day. They call upon us in a voice which ought to scare the trifier and rouse the indolent; a voice which ought to be heard above the syren song of pleasure, the clamorous solicitations of interest, the sneering scoffs of infidelity, or the coarse laugh of profligacy; a voice which, when *habitually* heard and obeyed, will dispel the delusions of the world, and set at nought the menaces of the wicked; a voice, too, which will linger upon memory, and mingle its soothing accents with the dread summons of the death call: will cause its peaceful whisper of a blessed Sabbath, an *everlasting rest*, to be heard, even amidst the thrilling blasts of the archangel's trumpet—awakening the world from death to judgment—the Christian from the grave to victory.

SERMON LI¹.

POPULAR EXCUSES FOR NEGLECTING THE LORD'S SUPPER.

THE PRAYER.

O LORD, we offer and present unto Thee, ourselves, our souls, and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice unto Thee, humbly beseeching Thee, that all we, who are partakers of Thy holy communion, may be fulfilled with Thy grace and heavenly benediction. And although we be unworthy, through our manifold sins, to offer unto Thee any sacrifice, yet we beseech Thee to accept this our bounden duty and service, not weighing our merits, but pardoning our offences, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

LUKE xiv. 18.

THEY ALL WITH ONE CONSENT BEGAN TO MAKE EXCUSE.

THIS text is so well known, as to entirely preclude the necessity of entering into any statement and

¹ This Sermon (with the exception of such alterations as were required to adapt it to the DOMESTIC CHAPLAIN) is taken from a volume of Sermons by the Editor published in 1825. As the

explanation of the parable from which it is taken. It forms a most appropriate introduction to discourses upon the folly and danger of slighting the invitation to the Lord's Supper. And to this purpose it has been so often used, I may almost say hackneyed, that upon hearing it, you may anticipate the substance of the discourse which is to follow. Little else can be offered but the repetition of long-urged arguments and exhortations.

You may be almost tempted to ask within yourselves, Have we not heard all? Is the necessity for this appeal so worn, so often made, never to cease? Never! while mankind are in their present corrupt and imperfect state; never, I fear, must that necessity cease. Never, certainly, while one single individual *habitually* turns his back upon that sacred rite; never will the duty of the clergy have been discharged, if they cease to admonish him of his error, to warn him that he is neglecting one of the most solemn and affecting commands that the Gospel presents to a Christian.

Whatsoever it may be that detains him from the Lord's Supper;—call it error; call it lowliness; call it timidity; call it what you will; I *know* it is not *religion*. I *know* it is not the *Gospel*. I know,

volume has been long out of print, and he has been particularly requested to publish this sermon as a separate tract, he trusts he may be pardoned for reprinting it in this work. It will form, with the three other Sermons on the Lord's Supper, a tolerably complete series on that important subject.

and *every* man who reads the Scriptures must know, that it is there commanded ¹, *distinctly, positively, solemnly* commanded, that Christians should eat bread and drink wine, in remembrance of the piercing of Christ's body, and the shedding of His blood upon the cross. Every man must know that this ordinance is of *perpetual* obligation; not of this age or of that, but to "show the Lord's death *till he come* ²." Every man must know that Christ instituted, St. Paul explained, the Apostles practised, this rite; not that we should despise, but that we should observe it.

These facts are obvious and indisputable. Who is there that can be ignorant of them?

Yet upon the recurrence of the stated periods for administering this holy sacrament, what numbers, professing themselves Christians, quit the Church, and turn their backs upon the altar. Numbers, we may say a great majority, of the world, spend a long life without once joining in this truly Christian festival. Numbers find themselves upon their sick beds; numbers pass the gates of death, to appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, without having once partaken of these "pledges of his love," without having once, as it were, renewed the seal of His blood.

My friends, when we shall be faint and gasping on our last sick bed; when sinking nature shall

¹ Matt. xxvi. 26. 1 Cor. xi. 23, &c. ² 1 Cor. xi. 26.

proclaim the struggle almost ended ; when our soul shall be about to quit this earth-built tabernacle, and to take its flight to meet the " Father of Spirits ;" when the world, to *us*, with all its vanities, shall be as nothing ; when we shall be made awfully sensible, that we have no stay, no hope, but in our crucified Redeemer ; will any man say that, at such a moment, it will be a consoling reflection, that during his whole life he has *slighted* the invitation, spurned the means of grace, presented by *that Saviour*, to whom alone he can now look for mercy and for salvation ? Is it a reflection which any man, with common sense, would *deliberately store up* for his last moments ? I am sure it is not. In the discharge of their professional duties, the clergy too often see proofs that it is not. They sometimes witness that awful scene, (and those who witness such scenes will not easily forget them) when a dying man has thought upon this neglect, but thought too late. He has set at nought, all his life, this commandment of his Saviour, and is conscious, perhaps, of having obstinately or thoughtlessly despised those opportunities for reformation of life, and for the renewal of the means of grace, which this institution, both in the preparation for it and in its reception ¹, is calculated to supply.

From not having sought information upon the subject while in health, he has probably *confused*

¹ Vide John vi. 53—56.

and *superstitious* notions of its nature and operation. Alarmed and agitated, he is eager to repair his neglect, and to partake of these "holy mysteries," these "pledges of" Christ's "love." But ere he can do this, the tongue is parched, the convulsed organs can no longer perform their functions. How tremendously expressive, on such occasions, are the mute signs of terror and remorse. The lips can utter no sounds; but the quivering frame, the clasped hands, the strained and eager eyes, speak volumes. These proclaim, if not more forcibly, at least more unquestionably, than words, the deep feelings of the soul within. They declare that he would think no sacrifice too great to purchase a short space to retrace his steps; that he would give worlds, if he had them, to have been sustained and cheered by those hopes, which are the fruit of a *well-founded, sincere, and active* faith in the atoning blood of the Redeemer. Such a faith, I mean, as will manifest itself, not by a confused and precipitate obedience in the extremity of calamity or danger, but will mainly and constantly animate the heart, direct and regulate the conduct; a faith which "worketh by love;" a faith which, highly appreciating the value of that atoning blood, will *delight* to do His pleasure, who "poured out his soul unto death;" will thirst for the promised blessings; will thankfully embrace His appointed means of grace; and will lead its possessor frequently, not only in sickness, but in the day of health and strength, to

“draw near” “and take this holy sacrament to” his “*comfort*.”

In the cases, however, to which I have just alluded, let me not be understood to circumscribe the mercy of the Almighty, and to assert that the repentance and earnest intention of these men will not be accepted, though they cannot carry it into effect. These are matters on which to pass judgment would savour of presumption; they are for *His* cognizance, who sees the heart, with all its feelings, thoughts, and workings. But I do maintain that no man, who could enter into their feelings, would wish them to be his; no man, I repeat, would *willingly* and *knowingly* store up such feelings for his death-bed. But some of you may reason within yourselves, that cases such as we have contemplated rarely occur, that multitudes go down to the grave in peace, who have never participated in this rite, and that you may do the same. This is admitted; it may so happen with you. Yet consider, let me put it to you as a matter worthy of some consideration. Consider whether the consequences I have above described are, or are not, really the *worst* consequences that may result from this open contempt of Christ's ordinance. Consider whether, after all, your situation may not be infinitely more wretched than theirs.

You may not, indeed, have one single uneasy thought upon this contempt either through life, or in death; but (to say nothing of your loss of the spiritual

help and strength offered in this sacrament) what grounds have you to assume, that you may not be compelled to remember it *after death*? Our Lord ordained a solemn rite in remembrance of His sacrifice; the Church has observed it ever since; His Apostle has declared, that it is to be observed "*till his coming again.*" What grounds then have you to assume, that this institution may be treated with contempt, and that no account of this will be taken at the day of judgment? If, then, an account is to be taken, what cause of hope, or of triumph will be found in the reflection, that you may live in disobedience and die without repentance? The sorrow of the dying man, though it wring the soul, is not without hope. It *may* be a "godly sorrow," that "worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of¹." But what will be his hope, whose heart shall condemn him at the tribunal of judgment—the tribunal before which "it is too late to cry for mercy, when it is the time of justice²?"

But why defer the consideration of this duty to *either* of these periods? why not rather "take heed while the day of salvation lasteth³?" Why, when the invitation to the Lord's Supper is continually proclaimed, why do so many with one consent begin to make excuse? Be assured that something is wrong. The commandment, as was observed before,

¹ 2 Cor. vii. 10.

² Communion Service.

³ Ibid.

is positive and universal. An *habitual* neglect of it must be criminal. There must be some fallacy in your excuses; but a fallacy, remember, which can deceive only your own hearts, not God. Let us, therefore, weigh in the scale of reason and truth, a few of the most general of these excuses; we shall find them "lighter than vanity itself."

The mistaken notions on which too many pervert St. Paul's caution to the Corinthians¹, into a pretence for shunning the Lord's Supper, have been already separately confuted². We will therefore confine ourselves in this discourse to the consideration of some of the other popular excuses offered for an act of such manifest disobedience, ingratitude, and, we may add, folly and danger.

I. First of all we meet with the general, and comprehensive excuse; "unworthiness," to partake of it, and consequent liability to the effects of God's wrath, whatsoever they may be.

There is, it must be confessed, something very specious and plausible in this excuse.

A man, who says he is unworthy, may probably give himself great credit for his *humility*, and flatter himself that this humility will be accepted as a palliation of his disobedience. But take good heed, brethren, that you mistake not for humility, a *cold indifference* to Christ's will, and an *indolent reluctance*

¹ 1 Cor. xi. 29.

² See Sermon xxiv. vol. i.

to undertake the great work of repentance. There is no method of self-deception more common, than that of using terms and phrases, without establishing in our minds clear and definite notions of their meaning. You say, you are *unworthy* to receive the Lord's Supper. Now let us distinctly understand what we *mean* by the term *unworthy*. Let us see what *really* makes a man *unworthy* to receive the Lord's Supper.

He, then, is *worthy*, who, (to use the words of our excellent Catechism,) "*examines himself whether he repents him truly of his former sins, steadfastly purposing to lead a new life; who has a lively faith in God's mercy, through Christ, with a thankful remembrance of His death; and is in charity with all men.*"

Therefore he, and he *only*, is *unworthy*, who determines *not* "to examine himself, and repent of his former sins, steadfastly purposing to lead a new life;" who has *not* "a lively faith in God's mercy through Christ;" nor "a thankful remembrance of His death;" and who is *not* "in charity with all men."

But, if such is your case, if *you* have actually resolved *not* to examine yourselves, and repent; if you have *no* faith in God's mercy, through Christ; if you have *not* a thankful remembrance of His death; if you are *not* in charity with all men; if such is your case, to what purpose do you assemble yourselves together in the Lord's house? In such

a frame of mind your very *prayers* are a complete mockery and abomination. To say, "Lord, Lord!" is "lost labour;" it is worse than lost labour, it is rank hypocrisy, it is a practical denial of the infinite and infallible knowledge of the Most High.

But it may, perhaps, be still urged that so it is; you are unworthy. And to partake of the Lord's Supper will only increase your condemnation. Be it so. Yet pause, and reflect upon this plea. Can any man *seriously* argue, that his perseverance in guilt will be admitted as any *excuse* for disobedience; that, because he will not increase that guilt, by receiving the Lord's Supper, both that, and the neglect of this command will pass with impunity; or that, if it is to be punished, he is calmly to wait for vengeance, instead of taking the speediest measures to escape it. Can it be thought that this is the course which a prudent man should pursue? Better, surely far better, is the counsel of St. Paul. "*Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup*¹." Trust not in *your worthiness*, but in the blood that was shed for you. Endeavour to render yourselves more worthy to partake of the Holy Communion. Diligently and honestly prepare yourself to share the consolations and the graces which a due participation is calculated to supply. Remember, it is not *perfect* righteousness that is required, (for then could "no

¹ 1 Cor. xi. 28.

man living be justified,") but faith and repentance. With these, let the pious and sincere Christian approach the altar, with humble confidence in the sufficiency of God's grace; and with hopes and prayers, that what is deficient in his imperfect efforts, may be supplied by the mercy of God, and the merits of his Redeemer.

II. But another excuse is brought forward, especially by the poorer classes of society; the want of time and opportunities to make necessary preparation. You urge, perhaps, that you are engaged in the duties of your household, or occupied in earning daily bread for yourselves and for your families.

A very large portion of your time is certainly engrossed in these employments. But can you imagine, that our Lord could not be fully aware of all this? And can you suppose that, foreseeing this, He meant to institute this blessed Sacrament; with all the spiritual benefits and assistances resulting from it, *only* for the rich, the leisured, and the learned; not for the poor, the industrious, and the unlearned? His Gospel was preached to *all*. It is even one of its peculiar and characteristic distinctions, that it was preached *especially to the poor*. Can it be believed, then, that He intended to exclude the *poor* man from manifesting his grateful remembrance of this mercy? Surely not. There is absurdity, almost impiety, in the very thought.

If, then, He did intend this rite for the poor as

well as for the rich ; for the laborious as well as for the leisured ; for the unlearned as well as for the learned ; He must have known perfectly well, that the necessary preparation is within their reach ; and, through God's grace, practicable with their means and opportunities.

And so it is. I have yet to learn what are those offices due to ourselves, or to our families, which are incompatible with a suitable preparation for the Lord's Supper. I am persuaded that the conscientious discharge of such offices, far from being inconsistent with a due preparation for this communion, is absolutely a *part*, and a very *important part* of it. I believe that a father or mother, when occupied in the diligent and careful regulation of their family, and in performing those tasks which are requisite for their comfort and support, may do all this to the *Glory of God*. They are doing works acceptable to Him. They are doing what He has enjoined and recommended in His Scriptures : they are doing their "*duty* in that state of life to which it has pleased" Him "to call them."

If, indeed, the care of their families lead them to acts of dishonesty, to the practice of wickedness, or the neglect of religion ; these, certainly, do make them unfit for the Lord's Supper. But they make them also unfit for prayer—unfit for death—and unfit for judgment.

The same observations are applicable to all those who gain their livelihood by their daily labour, or

by any calling; in short, to all who are occupied in what properly belongs to their station. They are engaged in that of which they need not be ashamed. Diligence and industry have, from the Scriptures, the sanction of both precept and example. And he who avoids idleness, stops the source of many a sin. Only follow in these things St. Paul's advice, to keep always in view the main object for which all is to be done. "Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, *as to the Lord*, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: *for ye serve Christ*¹."

Even with respect to the private opportunities for self-examination, for repentance, for prayer, and for praise, I have yet to learn what labours, or what duties, entirely preclude *them*. Well, indeed, too well, was it said, that "the children of this world are, in their generation, wiser than the children of light²." Many of the *wicked*, (though perhaps very laborious and diligent), in the evening, or at other times, find abundant opportunities for drunkenness, debauchery, and for every species of sin. Cannot the *religious*, then, contrive to set apart a few moments for self-examination, for repentance, and for holy resolution?

The *wicked* (even during their hardest labours) find means to occupy their minds in laying plans for fresh crimes, or to raise their voices in obsceni-

¹ Col. iii. 23, 24.

² Luke xvi. 8.

ties, imprecations, and blasphemies; yet cannot the religious-minded man, at the same time, find means to *meditate*, to *praise*, and to *pray*? What are the duties, what the labours, which prevent the meditations of the soul; the silent confession to Almighty God; the humble prayer, the heartfelt praise? What are the *duties* which forbid the parent, active in the concerns of her family, to think sometimes of that Saviour “of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named ¹ ;”—to seek His glory by endeavouring to “bring up” her household “in the nurture and admonition of the Lord ² ;” and to reflect upon the mercies of that God who has been graciously pleased to combine our truest happiness with our duty?

What are the toils which forbid the labourer to think with faith and gratitude upon that Redeemer, who has purchased for him a blissful and everlasting rest; who has given him the blessed assurance that his body, like the *seed* which he buries in the ground, shall rise again with renovated powers, and in unfading glory?

Be assured that these, and the like occupations, form no sound excuse for neglecting this holy sacrament. Every man, no matter what his station or condition of life, must prepare himself according to his means and abilities. Those who have more leisure, must make a corresponding improvement;

¹ Eph. iii. 15.

² Ibid. vi. 4.

those who have less, if they make a diligent and proper use of it, will be accepted "according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not¹."

Every man may *plead* that he has his duties and his pursuits; every man may urge business, or pleasure, or some occupation, as preventing him from making the necessary preparation. One may *say*, that he is going "to his farm, another to his merchandize." These may be *offered* as excuses for neglecting the Lord's Supper; but can they be *accepted*?

There is "a time to every purpose under heaven²." Time may, usually, be found for the "farm," time for the "merchandize," and time for God. But, if not time for all, the farm and the merchandize must be given up, not God. The path of a Christian is distinctly marked out. He must, if necessary, "forsake all," and take up the cross and follow Christ. He must be with Him or against Him. He must choose whom he will serve, *God* or *Mammon*; which he will embrace, *heaven* or the *world*.

III. A third excuse offered is, the fear of committing sin after having received the holy Communion. From sins of infirmity, and occasional lapses, no man living can be exempt; and we have good reason to trust that, where the Christian is

¹ 2 Cor. viii. 12.

² Eccles. iii. 1.

sincere, such errors and imperfections will not, through the mercy of God, and the merits of our Redeemer, be strictly marked. Were it not so, the best of men could not observe this institution; and our Lord would, therefore, never have ordained it. But from presumptuous, deliberate, and habitual sins, it is in the power of every man, with the assistance of God's grace, to secure himself.

Why, then, refuse to participate in that rite which pledges you to increased holiness, and to greater vigilance? Why not resolve to guard against sin? Why refuse to do this, unless you have secretly determined *not* to resist the approach of sin? If such be your determination, in what light will such contumacy and perverseness appear before God? With what reward will it meet? Will it not assuredly draw down well merited vengeance?

But it may, perhaps, be argued, that there are temptations, and that by these you may be drawn into deliberate sin. Should this be the answer of one calling himself a Christian, of one professing to read the Scriptures?

There we read distinctly that "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it¹." If, then, you are drawn into deliberate and

¹ 1 Cor. x. 13.

habitual sin, whose fault will it be? But strip, then, this excuse of the disguise, with which indolence, or love of the world, invests it, and it will amount to this. The invitation to the Lord's Supper requires you to forsake, and guard against, deliberate and habitual sin. You will not receive this sacrament. And why? *Because* you do not choose to employ those precautions which are within your reach; to exert those powers which God has given you; and to avail yourselves of that assistance, which He has promised, for the very purpose of enabling us "to *have victory* and to *triumph* against the devil, the world, and the flesh ¹." What kind of an excuse is this? It is a practical declaration, that you desert the standard of the great "Captain of your salvation;" that you abjure your baptismal vows, and that you will not be the "faithful soldier and servant ²" of Christ Jesus.

Supposing, however, you should be overcome by temptation, the sin is, indeed, unquestionably great. But is repentance no longer open to us? Is there no forgiveness for the true penitent? Because he has partaken of the Lord's Supper, has he lost the privilege of a Christian? Surely not. Through Christ he may hope to be pardoned upon sincere repentance. And without repentance, *who* can hope, or ask for forgiveness?

¹ Office of Baptism.

² Ibid.

IV. The last excuse to which your attention will be directed, is the want of *confirmation*. What! then, is the neglect of one duty to be pleaded as an *excuse* for slighting another? So far from being an *excuse*, it is absolutely not even a *reason* for refusing the Lord's Supper. The directions of the Church upon this point have been misunderstood. They do not forbid from the Lord's table those who have not been confirmed; but only those who have not been, and *do not intend* to be confirmed. Here are the very words of the rubric. No man that attends to them can mistake their meaning. "There shall none be admitted to the holy Communion, until such time as he be confirmed, or be *ready* and *desirous* to be confirmed¹."

Therefore, you, who have attained a sufficient age, and neither have been confirmed nor have received the Lord's Supper, take shame to yourselves for your past omission of both these duties, and lose no time in repairing your error. Receive the holy Communion immediately, and firmly resolve to receive confirmation the very first opportunity that presents itself.

These are some of the most common excuses; and of these I have endeavoured to expose the sophistry and the emptiness, as fully as the limits of a discourse will permit. Those, who require

¹ Rubric at end of Order of Confirmation.

“further comfort or counsel,” the Church has directed to apply for it to their pastor.

Only let your profession and your practice be consistent. If there be any who believes not in Christ, *he* is consistent in his contempt of this ordinance. Either he looks for nothing after death, or he builds his hope upon some other foundation than that of which Christ is the corner stone. That man, I say, is consistent. He despises the Redeemer, and he despises His institutions. But among our readers or hearers it is to be presumed there are none such. I trust, all these look for salvation through Christ Jesus: all aspire to the blessings, all participate in the hopes, which were purchased for mankind by the sacrifice of His body, and the shedding of His blood upon the cross. But where are these hopes manifested, where is a sense of these blessings displayed, by *him* who passes his whole life in neglect of that very ordinance which was established *expressly* to commemorate the foundation of these hopes, and the purchase of these blessings? Where is *his faith*, where is *his hope*, where is *his love*, who, upon every invitation to the Lord's Supper, continues “to make excuses.”

My friends, such excuses, I repeat, must be fallacious. Do not rely upon them now. Remember, you will have to plead them hereafter at the bar of judgment, when all fallacies must be exposed, all hearts be open. Consider that *all* men may urge the same pleas; that these excuses, if

they avail you *now*, would avail you *always*; if they justified *your* disobedience, they would also justify the disobedience of *all other men*. But if they justified the disobedience of *all men*, and at *all times*, then you come to this conclusion : that Christ established an ordinance which He did not *intend* to be observed ; that He gave a commandment which He did not *wish* to be obeyed ; in short, that He *meant nothing* when He said, “ *Do this in remembrance of me.*”

Reasoning, which leads to this conclusion, how fallacious, how dangerous must it be ! Beware of it. “ Judge yourselves, brethren, that ye be not judged of the Lord ¹.”

Finally. Let me close this subject by entreating you not to lose sight of it. Reflect well upon what has been stated. Honestly and manfully act up to your convictions. If you are satisfied it is your “ bounden duty and service” to receive the Lord’s Supper, let nothing dissuade, nothing deter you from it. Multitudes may neglect it; but multitudes cannot alter the nature of sin and disobedience. You must not “ follow a multitude to do evil.” Let every individual rather do his best endeavour to *diminish* that multitude, and to take away the reproach. Neither be foolishly “ *ashamed* of that which is good.” Rather, each of you strive to

¹ Communion Office.

make the blush of shame rise where it *ought* to rise; not in his face who is doing his duty to his God, and to his Redeemer; but in *his*, who is basely deserting, or audaciously setting them at nought. Let each do his part, that the guests at the Lord's table may become more numerous than those who "make excuses:" that these latter, becoming conspicuous, may be ashamed to quit all their brethren assembling round the altar; that, in a word, seeing the good work, they may repent, and return, and join in glorifying our heavenly Father, through His Son Jesus Christ our Saviour.

SERMON LII.

THE END OF THE YEAR.

THE PRAYER.

O ALMIGHTY GOD, with whom do live the spirits of just men made perfect, after they are delivered from their earthly prisons; teach us, in the daily spectacles of mortality, to see how frail and uncertain our own condition is; and so to number our days, that we may seriously apply our hearts to that holy and heavenly wisdom, whilst we live here, which may in the end bring us to life everlasting, through the merits of Jesus Christ, thine only Son our Lord. Amen.

ISAIAH xl. 6—8.

THE VOICE SAID, CRY. AND HE SAID, WHAT SHALL I CRY? ALL FLESH IS GRASS, AND ALL THE GOODLINESS THEREOF IS AS THE FLOWER OF THE FIELD: THE GRASS WITHERETH, THE FLOWER FADETH: BECAUSE THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD BLOWETH UPON IT: SURELY THE PEOPLE IS GRASS. THE GRASS WITHERETH, THE FLOWER FADETH: BUT THE WORD OF OUR GOD SHALL STAND FOR EVER.

THE last of this series of Sermons *for the year* is now to be offered to the meditations of those, who may have been pleased to have attended to the

instructions and admonitions of the "DOMESTIC CHAPLAIN."

If, feeling difficulty in the choice of a subject which might harmonize both with the general tenor, and also with the conclusion of his work, he were to ask, with the prophet in the text, "*What shall I cry?*" "*the voice*" of the expiring *year*, to which the series is devoted, suggests, both to him and his readers, a theme of obvious and universal interest.—
"All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field: the grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the Spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever."

Brethren,—fellow heirs of frailty and mortality, candidates for the crown of everlasting life through Christ Jesus,—if you have followed me in this series of Sermons, and have, as it were, held converse with me as a messenger of God on each Lord's day of a *whole year*, bethink you well on the meaning of that word—YEAR. It is a division of *time*. Yes! and it is a division of *my* time, and *your* time. It is not a mere human and arbitrary division invented by man; nor is it to be looked at only as a convenient method of noting time for the operations of human science, for the arrangements of worldly business, and the schemes of worldly pleasure. A *year*, in the eyes of a Christian, has another origin, and other relations. It is a division

of time which originated with the handy-work and arrangement of that great Artificer, who *set lights in the firmament of heaven, and ordained them for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and for years*; nay, more, who hath given to man his *appointed* time, who hath assigned to him *his threescore and ten years, his labour and sorrow, and then soon to pass away and be gone*. It relates also to a science far more important than the proudest attainments of human knowledge, to a crown beyond all comparison more glorious than the brightest visions of human ambition, and to pleasures which not only surpass, both in exquisiteness and endurance, all earthly enjoyments, but “which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive.” With that great Being, with those all-important interests, is every passing year of this our transitory life connected. Years are “degrees,” traced by the finger of Almighty God Himself upon the dial of human existence. When the ever moving shadow, which, though the sun itself go backward, *never* goeth backward, is passing over one of those brief but precious divisions of our time, surely the considerations suggested by such an event are too obvious and too interesting to escape our notice.

It matters not, that these reflections may be common place; it matters not that year after year similar reflections may have been suggested to you. It is not because that which “one day telleth

another, and one night certifieth another¹," is the same, that it must therefore cease to be interesting, or important, in the estimation of the Christian and the mortal. It is neither the repetition, nor the novelty, but the magnitude, and the universal concern, of those subjects, which should establish the estimate of them in the mind of the reasonable and the religious. We are too apt to forget the things that are not seen, in our fierce chase after the objects which are seen, and which immediately tempt our desires and passions. Every season, which abstracts us for a while from the latter, and directs our thoughts and faith to the former, should be carefully and profitably applied; and none more so, than the recollections naturally excited by each departing year. No frequency of their recurrence, no familiarity of the subjects, can diminish their awful interest. Time, eternity, death, and judgment! can these ever be made trivial considerations with mortal and accountable beings? Let the hopeless infidel, let the seared reprobate, past feeling, and given up to lasciviousness, let the fool, the brute, the madman, despise them—but the Christian cannot. To him each departing year echoes the warning of his Master, "Watch, therefore, for ye know not at what hour your Lord doth come²." The *voice* speaks to him in the events of that year. "All flesh is grass, and all the goodness thereof is as

¹ Ps. xix. 2. Liturgy.

² Matt. xxiv. 42.

the flower of the field: the grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever."

Look back, brethren, at the proofs of this uncertain and transitory character of human life, and of all things, which you have had, this very year, in your thoughts, in your instruction, in your reading, in your friends and neighbours, and perhaps in your own little family circle. All things, the world, the grave, the Gospel, all you reverence, all you have, all you enjoy, all unite with that "voice," and call on you to "be *ready*;" for ye know not the hour in which the Son of man cometh, and in which you may be called on to "*give account of your stewardship*."

Insatiate death plies incessantly his terrible and indiscriminate harvest. Heathen and Christian, the experience of man and the word of God, direct our attention to the unsparing sweep of his fatal scythe. Not only the head already white for the harvest, but the robust stem of manhood, the fair and joyous flower of youth, and the tender blade of infancy, fall before it. Be ready for him, brethren. Hear "*the voice*" which proclaims his universal power; and let that voice dispose you to listen to the concluding exhortations of the "DOMESTIC CHAPLAIN," which will briefly direct you to heads of self-examination in some of the principal duties

and relations which he has discussed, and to the review which, at the close of the year, you ought to take of your conduct respecting them.

I. Masters of families ! Ye are yourselves but servants of the universal Lord. How are you prepared to give Him an account of your stewardship for the *past year* ? You, or yours, might have “withered” in that period. How would the account have stood, in such a case, under the searching eye of an all-seeing Judge ? You have been told by the “DOMESTIC CHAPLAIN¹,” nay, by the word of God, that if you provide not for those of your own house in spiritual, as well as temporal, matters, you have “denied the faith,” and are “worse than an infidel.” How have you heard this admonition—as the message of God to be obeyed reverently and instantly, or as a thing to be heard and forgotten, or put off to “a convenient season ?” Say, brethren, have you acted as well as read ? Have you, like Abraham, commanded and taught those under you to “keep the way of the Lord ?” What have you done to impress on your servants and dependents a sense of their communion with the Church, and family, of Christ ? Do they feel, do they exercise, and keep up their sympathy, their union with it, their interest in its welfare, and privileges, by frequently partaking of the holy Communion of the

¹ Sermon V. Vol. I.

body and blood of Christ, by the ordinances of public worship, by observing the Sabbath as a blessed sign, that the Lord is their God, and their Saviour? If not, whose fault is this grievous neglect and sin? Take care, masters, that it may not lie at your door. Have you permitted, nay, have you required, them to use those means of grace?

Again, have you given heed to the duty of *family prayer*? Perhaps of those now addressed, some may have felt the obligations of this duty, and, notwithstanding such feelings, may have been led by diffidence, or other causes, to put off the performance of it. The "DOMESTIC CHAPLAIN" pointed out the weakness and sinfulness of such delay. Let him now at the close of the year ask—Why have you not *profited* and *acted* upon those suggestions? Is this groundless diffidence, this dangerous irresolution, never to be overcome? Why have you not already *begun* the practice of family prayer? Hear the voice, "All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof as the flower of the field: the grass withereth, the flower fadeth."

The poor creatures of a day, whose ridicule you fear, shall wither as grass; you also must in like manner fall, and you know not how soon the death blast may blow upon you. In such case what account could you give of this ill-timed diffidence? Where would be the tokens of the love of Christ urging you to love the brethren, and to rejoice even in shame and tribulation for His name's sake?

Could you, had such been this year the fate of yourself, or of any of your house, could you have given an account of your stewardship in the spirit of your own blessed Master ;—"Of them which Thou gavest me, have I lost none."

II. Parents ! A year has passed over your children. You have watched over them, perhaps rejoiced over them. You have seen with pride and triumph the results of your endeavours to prepare them for their station in life ; you have exulted in their rising talents, and anticipated with satisfaction the honour and advancement for which they are preparing. This may be allowable and innocent. But this should not be all. If, in the midst of the sunshine of youthful joy and improvement, the chill blast of death had passed over those bright and cherished blossoms of your hope and affections, and the world, and the hopes you had built for them upon its advantages, had been to them as nothing, and they to you as the blade withered before it is ripe, what then would have been your stay and consolation ? Could you cheer and sustain your wounded spirit by the reflection, that the truth, uttered by the "*voice*," had been always present to you, and had always influenced you in your mode of educating them ? Could you find comfort in the thought, that, during *this past year*, you had been

¹ John xviii. 9.

bringing them up, not only for the advantages of this world, but also for the glories of the next; that you had fitted them, not only for time, but for eternity? If your heart to this question cannot return an answer of peace, and they are yet spared to you, be awakened to this important subject, and let such wisdom direct your conduct towards them next year. Hear the voice! Be not misled by youth or health: for to all the voice addresses itself, "All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field: the grass withereth, the flower fadeth."

Neither let children overlook the same salutary caution. Uncertain as may be their existence, still more so is that of their parents. And think, my younger friends, if those parents, who loved you as their lives, those whom God, as you hope for His favour, commands you to love and honour, think of the remorse and guilt you would have contracted if they had withered this year; if their last hour had been hastened, their last sigh extorted and embittered, by your ingratitude and disobedience; and if they had passed to the presence of your Judge with this record of your guilt and perverseness. Hear the voice; and next year, and every year of your lives, act as must become those who know that it speaketh the truth.

III. Husbands and wives! Hear ye also "the voice!" Before the altar of the Lord, and under

the sanctions and blessings of His ministers, you vowed love and fidelity, mutual comfort and support, through this your pilgrimage. But even then, in the very hour of joy and seeming strength, arising from the union of hearts and pledges of mutual support, the Church suffered you not to lose sight of the mere temporary interest you have in all that you could confer upon each other here. The utmost extension of this interest is but as a span long. The words, "*till death us do part*," while they declare that you were joined together in a bond which is not to be broken in this life, remind you also, that it is the contract of mortals, and that the time must come, when those, whose hands were joined together, must be put asunder; and they must pass to that kingdom where there is "neither marrying nor giving in marriage." When that separation is to come upon each, God alone knows. But come it must. The grass will wither, and the flower fade. Hearts, united by the closest ties of affection, must feel the pangs of separation by the hand of death. O let not the trial of that hour be increased by the memory of mutual unkindnesses. Let not the termination of the contract be clouded by the reproaches of conscience for its violation. Remember those duties which we have urged, and others which your own reflections may suggest; apply them to your conduct in the year now passing, and thence take cautions for turning the next to the best advantage, that God,

under whose sanction you were joined in the bands of earthly wedlock, may hereafter call you, with all those who have been faithful, to rejoice in the marriage of the Lamb with His Church, in a kingdom where hearts joined together in holy love shall neither be disturbed by infirmities, nor separated by mortality.

IV. Servants! Hear ye also "the voice." In the last year your master, your fellow-servants, yourselves, might have withered, and passed from this transitory scene. And, at all events, you know that the voice saith true, that you will all in a few short years fade like flowers of the field. Your place on earth will be known no more. Let all your duties be performed under a lively sense of this awful truth. For, like Gehazi¹, you will one day stand before a Master, whose spirit is ever present with you, and is privy to every thing you do, or say, or think. He will speak to you in a power far more terrible than that in which Elisha rebuked his guilty and covetous servant. Before Him, all your misdeeds and negligence will rise up and condemn you. You will be covered with shame if your conscience shall reproach you with purloining, and not showing good fidelity to your earthly master. If Gehazi was speechless with terror and confusion when Elisha said, "*Went not mine heart*

¹ 2 Kings v. 20—27.

with thee?" what will be your confusion when God shall question with you. How will you depart from His presence at His rebuke? A leprosy more dreadful than Naaman's will cleave to you—the leprosy of Divine wrath for ever and ever. How then have you acted this year? Have you considered your duties to God and man? have you conducted yourselves, “not with eye-service as men-pleasers,” but as looking to a more enduring state, and “serving the Lord?”

V. To all the voice utters its warning. It tells us that all here is transitory, our pleasures, our possessions, the objects of our pursuit, of our love, and fondest affections—nay, our very life itself. All the relations of this world will pass away, all the things that excite contention, and envy, and discontent, and murmuring. Every thing here is unstable and withering; nothing is fixed and permanent. Of every thing around us, as connected only with this world, we may exclaim, “Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.” They will, if we fix our hearts and hopes upon them, deceive and betray us in the hour of need. As the mariner, who has been tempted by the immoveable and solid appearance of a grounded iceberg to seek refuge under its lofty sides, finds in the hour of trial a faithless haven; and that the mighty mass to which he looked for protection, may itself be driven by the current, and wielded by the heaving surge, till it shall hurry

into fresh perils, or overwhelm in awful destruction the ill-fated bark which had been attached to it for repose and safety : so will it be with those who rest their peace and security on even the most specious and promising things of the world. All here is perishable ; all will wither like grass : to be ever safe, we must attach ourselves to something more solid and permanent. And the "voice," which shows the insecurity and uncertainty of all other things, likewise declares where we may find a solid resting place, "THE WORD OF OUR GOD SHALL STAND FOR EVER." On that, and that only, is our sure dependence. Let years roll on, let disease, or age, or loss of friends, or the daily triumphs of death over great and lowly, rich and poor, young and old, all join, with the prophetic voice, in proclaiming that all flesh is grass, and all the goodness thereof as the flower of the field : yet we also know that "*the word of our God shall stand for ever.*" "And this," says the Apostle Peter, "is the word which by the Gospel is preached unto you¹."

On that alone let your trust be established. Year after year be more familiar with its doctrines, more practised in its precepts, more bound up in its hopes, more sensible of its blessings, more desirous of the consummation of its promises. In all the relations of life make it your motive, your guide, your strength, your consolation. Then, when our

¹ 1 Pet. i. 25.

years shall be numbered, when the grass shall wither, and the flower fade, may it contain the seeds of immortality in bliss! May the grave be to our mortal bodies as the furrow of a fruitful field to the grain of wheat¹, to render them up again at the last day glorified bodies; when the "trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible," when "death shall be swallowed up in victory," when the thanks of the redeemed, amidst the songs and shouts of angels and archangels, shall be poured out before the throne of God, who "giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ;" and who, by the power and grace of the Holy Spirit, hath enabled His servants to be "stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; forasmuch as they know that their labour is not in vain in the Lord," and are assured that "THE WORD OF OUR GOD SHALL STAND FOR EVER."

¹ See 1 Cor. xv. 35—54.

THE END.

LONDON:
GILBERT & RIVINGTON, PRINTERS,
ST. JOHN'S SQUARE.



